

NAMES AND THEIR LATIN DERIVATION.—See page 284.

THE
LONDON READER
of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1705.—VOL LXVI.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 4, 1896.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"SAY 'YES,' DARLING—SAY IT QUICKLY—SOMEONE IS COMING," PLEASED FRANK.

A WOMAN'S STRATAGEM.

[A NOVELETTE]

CHAPTER I.

A YOUNG girl, elegantly dressed, came one fine spring morning into the boudoir at No.—, Hill-street, and dropped into a chair in a dispirited fashion. Two very bright eyes, belonging to a still younger girl lying on the sofa, were raised from the book their owner held, and a voice, half-delighted, half-pitying, said,—

"What is the matter, Agnes, dear?"

They were sisters, plainly; both pretty, the youngest more than pretty, and looking so very delicate, with the shadow over the large innocent eyes, and the transparency of the colourless complexion, that she aroused interest as well as admiration. And she seemed so young to be wearing a wedding ring.

To her question the only answer was a burst of tears, which seemed to distress the younger girl.

She made a half-movement to rise, whereat her sister checked her sobs abruptly, and, leaving her seat, came over to the sofa.

"I am a wretch, Nina," said she still tearfully, "to worry you. You look as if to-day was one of your bad days. But I am so miserable I couldn't help coming to you. We were always chums, and somehow you always help me. But you can't help me here."

"Perhaps I can, dear," answered Nina Herbert, cheerfully. "Sit down and tell me—is it about Frank?"

"Where's Alan?" said Miss Forrester, lowering her voice, and drawing off her gloves.

"He's out somewhere—I don't know where. He rushed in here, all, in a hurry, to say good-bye an hour ago—he had to keep some appointment—something about a horse. He won't be in yet, if it's to be a secret from him."

"I never saw such a fellow—he's always off

somewhere. Don't you feel lonely? You've not been married long enough to get tired of seeing him," said Agnes, laughingly.

"I can't expect him to be tied to my girdle," said Nina, quietly; "he's so fond of life and movement, and such a favourite, why should I spoil his pleasure? Besides, I have such a horror of getting selfish."

"You're making him selfish," said the other, rather shortly.

"No, not selfish—he has been so spoiled, he doesn't think, that's all," said the young wife, pleadingly. "Never mind him now, though—I want to hear about you. Has Frank said anything to papa?"

"That's just it, and papa wouldn't hear of it; nor mamma neither. I had a regular lecture from her, Nina. It's nothing in the world but because Frank isn't wealthy; but he has quite enough to keep me in the same position I hold now. No, you've married an Honourable, an heir-presumptive, with plenty of money, and they think I'll do the same if they wait. But

what's the pleasure of having an extra thousand a-year to spend when you hate the man who gives it you?"

"Poor Agnes!" said Nina Herbert. Then her pale face flushed eagerly as she said, "You won't give up Frank though, Agnes? You love him—he loves you—and I don't think papa ought to refuse him for that reason."

"Give him up! Of course not! And I'll write to him, too, and see him—it's all the pleasure in life I have now you've gone. Besides, they have no right to send him away. I tell you, Nina, I could do something desperate. You would in my case—only, happily, everyone was too delighted."

"Well, don't do anything desperate yet," said Nina, smiling. "I'll help you, Agnes—what do you say to meeting Frank here? Alan is out so much, and mamma is never surprised how often you are here; and if we are careful the servants can't talk. And letters, you know, under cover to me—oh, it will be capital!" said she, clapping her pretty hands, deeply interested in a course of true love, as is proper at romantic nineteen.

"But Alan—he is so quick—he would find out."

"No, he won't—he'd never think I should side with you and Frank like that. He never thought Frank in earnest, you know—says he's been in love a dozen times, and it's only a flirtation. I'm afraid the first judgment is true, but I don't think the last is. I believe he's real enough in this case. And even if Alan did find out, he'd only want me to give up my part—he'd never tell mamma."

"But he'd be angry with you. I don't want to get you into trouble!"

Nina opened her blue eyes and positively stared at her sister in the excess of her astonishment.

"Alan angry—with me!" said she, at length. "He's never said a sharp word to me since the day we were married! He's never angry about little things. He'd laugh at me, perhaps. As to the right and the wrong of it, I don't think—well, I oughtn't to say it, I daresay," said Nina, who was very fond of her father and mother—"but I don't think they are treating you quite fairly, Agnes. Frank's a nice, steady fellow, well connected, well enough off—what more do they want? It isn't every day that rich fellows marry portionless girls like you and I!"

"Unless they fall in love at first sight with a pretty face," said Agnes, laughing. "Move heaven and earth to get an introduction, and give no one any peace till the prize is in possession. But I haven't your looks, Nina."

Nina coloured a little, and laughed too.

"Poor Alan!" said she, sighing the next minute. "And what has he gained for all the trouble he took? He wouldn't listen to mamma when she wanted us to wait, and I believed everything he said was right; and now he's got a delicate wife who can't be his companion."

"Oh! but Nina, that's not anyone's fault. You were always delicate, but it was that horrid fever you caught on your wedding tour that was the real cause of your invalidism! The doctors all say you may get stronger."

"May!" said Nina, sadly. "I don't place much faith in that myself. Alan does, but then he can't bear to think I'm never going to be better. There he is!" she said, suddenly, a light springing into her eyes. "Hush! Agnes; we'll settle that further. He mustn't think there is anything between us, and he mustn't see me looking so melancholy either."

"I wish my brother-in-law thought as much for you as you do for him!" muttered Miss Forrester, as the door opened gently, and a young man, tall and slight, and aristocratic-looking, entered.

Whether he were thoughtless of his girl-wife or no, there was no want of love for her in either voice or look, as, not apparently noticing any one else, he bent over her and kissed her.

"You're back sooner than I expected, Alan," said the girl. "Here is Agnes—don't you see her?"

Captain Herbert started up with a quick apology as he greeted his sister-in-law.

"Am I disturbing a feminine confab?" said he, with a smile, so sunny that it was no wonder

women spoiled him. "I only wanted to tell Nina about my projected purchase, and that will do any time."

"No, it won't—tell it now," said Nina. "Sit down here on my sofa"—pulling him down—"and let's hear. What have you seen?"

"Such a beauty; but I won't buy it till you know what he's like."

And he gave an enthusiastic description of the riding-horse he had been looking at.

Nina was too happy to have him by her to be weary. And, besides, she never suffered her readily-claimed sympathy to flag, however ill she felt.

He was so little at home she was determined he should always be sure of a bright welcome. Now she gave her advice as far as she could; and whatever its worth, since she had not even seen the horse, she knew he would not have bought the animal if she had been against it. And satisfied on that point, Herbert turned to Agnes.

"Is anything wrong?" he said, kindly. "You look as if—?" Here Miss Agnes coloured, and he smiled a little. "I think I am *de trop*."

"No," said Nina, holding him fast, "you are not to be driven away!"

"But I must go soon, pretty one!"

The girl's face fell. She laid it against his arm that he might not see it, and asked "where are you going?"

"I've just time for luncheon, and then back to buy this horse. Then do you remember Tom Harrison leaves for India next week—he's exchanged—and the rest of us fellows give him a farewell dinner to-night! It's a shame to leave you so, darling, but I couldn't get out of that, you know. I shall see you before I go."

"Of course, I always put your button-hole in for you. I'll give you a beauty to-night, Alan, in honour of Tom Harrison. I like him," she said, saucily.

"Oh, do you? You'd better send the flower to him then. Agnes don't you think Nina is a fraud? If she is ill enough to lie here she wouldn't be so impudent."

Agnes forgave the misconception in the speech for the sake of the wistful, longing look that did not at all accord with it.

"Ah," said she, gently, "we hope she will be able to dispense with that sofa one day."

She had not herself great faith in that "one day," or else Nina had infected her, but she could not help giving him that crumb of comfort.

He took it eagerly.

"That's what I say," he answered, "but Nina won't believe it, and says I shall be disappointed."

"Never mind me," said Nina; "there's the luncheon bell. Take Agnes down with you. I am too tired to come to-day, and when you are going send her up to me again."

Agnes met her sister's look, and though she would rather have had her talk out, took off her hat and went down with her brother.

But Nina had not been long alone before both invaded her sanctum, again, her husband to say good-bye till the afternoon and depart, and Agnes to declare she must get home—mamma would wonder what had become of her.

"Well, then, Agnes," said her sister, "that is all settled. I shall say nothing to Alan about papa having refused Frank Waverley. He'll never ask anything, and as, of course, you will be very little with Frank in public. Alan won't think anything more about it. He's careless though he's quick. And as I say, if he knew he wouldn't mind."

"Nina, you're a darling!" said Agnes, enthusiastically. "I want to see poor Frank very soon."

"Well, settle it between you—by letter if you like. I want you to be happy, Agnes—as happy as I am."

For she was happy, despite one drawback.

Last season the marriage of Captain the Hon. Alan Herbert and pretty Nina Forrester had been the brightest that had taken place.

In vain had mamma protested the bride was scarcely more than a child. Handsome Alan Herbert, who always got his own way, pleaded for no delay, and Nina seconded him still more eloquently by her wistful eyes and her silence.

So Mamma Forrester yielded, and, of course, Papa Forrester did.

Perhaps had the bridegroom not been an heir-presumptive, though the life between him and the peerage was a strong one, he would not so easily have won his bloodless victory. But he did, and carried off his bride in triumph to Italy, where the poor child gave up to the terrible fever what little strength she had had.

Everything was done that money could do and love, for Alan knew neither rest nor peace till his darling was better.

But when he brought her back to England the doctors shook their heads, and said the recovery of strength, if ever it came, must be a work of time.

Well, Alan had troops of friends. He was asked here, there, and everywhere. Without having an idea of neglecting Nina, without having a shadeless of love, he somehow drifted into going out continually.

Perhaps Nina in the beginning had been an unconscious factor in what was practically selfishness.

She had such a dread of tying him down to her that she went too far the other way, and urged him to go out.

He was bright and fond of gaieties. He had not lost his zest for life. Why should he? It was ample enough; and, besides, as Nina remained persistently in the same indifferent state of health, he was willing enough to drown worry and thought.

But Nina, and he himself, scarcely understood this. She would not think him selfish—he was only thoughtful; and he—he did not think at all.

But they were very happy, for love was still undimmed.

CHAPTER II.

MR. FRANK WAVERLEY, a good-looking young fellow in the Foreign Office, with a small private income and some expectations, took his dimissal very much to heart, but having plenty of spirit had no idea of yielding the position. This was understood between him and Agnes by some occult means, for they had not met and they had not written. The first move in the scheme of rebellion was made by Nina Herbert, who, in her amiable life, thoroughly enjoyed the little excitement, and in her innocence forgot there might be some difficulties before her. She sent for Mr. Frank Waverley, and the young man presented himself at that witching hour when gentlemen of the Civil Service find their energies exhausted by five hours' work. Nina received him in her boudoir, a room which held everything heart could desire.

"Do you know why I sent for you?" said she, when both were seated. "You know I always took your part."

"I know you are always goodness itself, dear Mrs. Herbert."

"Well," said she, smiling, "I am going to deserve your kind opinion. Agnes is in the next room."

"What!" He sprang up. "Mrs. Herbert, you are an angel!"

"Go! go!" said she, laughing, "that door behind the curtain. Don't be too long, and come back here."

"Oh, Frank!" was what she heard next, as the door opened, and she could picture that meeting—had she not gone through it all herself?

"Oh! Frank," said Agnes, when the first transports were over—and it took a good time to get over them—"what shall we do? Are we to part?"

"Not with my good-will—what do you say?" Waverley answered. "I think it is all an injustice. But you shall decide."

"Ah! you know what my decision will be. We can be patient and wait; perhaps they will relent."

"I have not much belief in that. I think we might wait till we were grey-headed, unless someone left me a fortune in the interim. Meanwhile we can meet sometimes, I suppose?"

"Yes! don't you know Nina has settled! We can see each other here occasionally, and we can write as often as we like."

"But, my dearest, you forget, Captain Herbert will know all about it, and—"

"No! Frank," said she, "that's just what he won't—and Nina says if he did he wouldn't tell mamma. But he will be in blissful ignorance; he never thought there was anything more than a flirtation, and he is not to hear anything about that refusal of papa's. I asked mamma not to tell anyone—not even Alan, and she promised she hadn't; and I never knew her to let out what she had promised to keep secret."

"That will do very well for a time," said Frank, with a relieved face; "but I won't have it for long. Agnes, seeing you once a fortnight perhaps."

"It is all we can do," said Agnes, beginning to feel that this lover of hers was showing signs of taking the bit between his teeth.

"I don't think so, Agnes; other people have broken just such a shackle as they are tying round you."

"What do you mean, Frank?" she said, looking frightened. "Now please don't be unmanageable, I don't understand you like that."

"You know what I mean, Agnes," he said, looking down into her face with a shrinking glance and changing colour.

She drew back.

"Oh, no; I couldn't. In our world think what we brave; everyone would talk, and father and mother would never forgive us! Even Nina wouldn't like that."

"I believe 'even Nina' would have been quite wicked enough to consent to such a thing if it had been asked of her, Agnes. She is as spirited as she can be; and so are you, dear, in truth. But we will not discuss it now, only give it some thought. Meanwhile, we are to have stolen interviews like the novel hero and heroine, from which," said Frank, disconsolately, "I am to go back to my lonely chambers."

"Lonely, indeed, sir! Don't be sentimental. How many nights do you spend in those chambers? You were at Lady Ellis's ball the night before last, and that pretty Mrs. Manton's dance last night, and dined outrageously."

"Well, I must console myself. You are nowhere to be seen, so what can I do? Who told you that, though? your brother? He thinks me a regular flirt."

"So you are, Frank, I believe. No, he didn't tell me, it was Mrs. Manton herself. She knows everything and tells everything—what she knows and what she doesn't. She's a rich widow, youngish and fascinating, and she's nothing else to do but gossip and be attractive. All you men drift with her!"

"Except—" began Frank.

She took him up with—

"Except you! Don't perjure yourself, gray!"

"No, on my honour, I wasn't thinking of myself."

"Who, then? Alan? Oh, he says pretty things of course, but he does no harm. You're all glad to go to her house."

"But, Agnes, granted that I too say pretty things to our charming widow, you know—"

His arm about her, and his lips touching her cheek, said the rest. The girl smiled up at him.

"Yes, I know," said she, gently; "I trust you Frank—I am sure you love me! I am not jealous of Mrs. Manton, or anyone."

Pity that just at this point Nina's silver voice called out,—

"Now, you two, are you above the charms of tea?"

Frank burst out laughing, and Agnes, faint to laugh too, opened the door into the boudoir and went in. There stood Nina's own exquisite little tea-set on the gipsy table beside her—and really, over such a set it was possible to be romantic, even to make love. That china was above the common earth. Nina glanced rogishly at her two guests.

"I hope I have not been an interloper," said she, demurely, "but I daresay Frank would not object to a little more of charming society."

Frank very decidedly did not object, and drank the finest mixture without much idea what it was. They chatted gaily; poor Nina only dreaded the loneliness when they were gone; for her

husband, she knew, would perhaps only be back just in time to dress for dinner, as was often the case. Frank went first, then Agnes was sent home in the carriage, and Nina rejoiced at the success of her first attempt.

She had no thought of danger, no sinister wish to deceive either her parents or her husband; she thought it only a bit of fun, and that Alan wouldn't at all care when the thing was over.

The little scheme went on gaily—letters were so constant that married Mrs. Nina laughed, impudently ignoring the fact that on one occasion during her engagement the postal revenue had been considerably increased by her and Alan.

That distinguished offshoot of aristocracy meanwhile went his way as usual; danced a great deal, flirted mildly, boated, rode, drove his four-in-hand as no other member of the famous club could surpass; loved his young wife as dearly as ever and saw as little of her; never came home without bringing her a book or a flower or something; did nothing without consulting her; told her all the scraps of news, and had but one ungratified wish—that she was strong. So deep in his heart that longing lay, that it took the edge off all his pleasure. And to do him justice, he never made his plans for the day until he knew whether she was well enough to drive; he would have given up a Magazine meet, with its throngs of admiring spectators, to have Nina sitting beside him while he drove his beautiful greys out into the country.

But that was not very often. On one of these occasions, however, they had driven out Norwood way, and when the prancing horses were clear of the streets and gave their owner time to talk, he turned to Nina, whose slight colour and dancing eyes showed her pleasure in the warm day and rich, green country.

"You're not nervous of these spirited brutes?" he said, smiling at her.

"Oh, no, not with you. I should be with anyone else!"

"Is that a compliment, or that unreasoning reliance women have?"

"Both, I think."

The answer pleased him, whether it were unreasoning or no. Presently he said,—

"Waverley was at the Mantons last night. He is just what I always said, Nina. I don't believe he cares for Agnes, really."

"Because he flirts with Mrs. Manton! But you do, too, Alan!"

"No, I don't," he said, laughing; "though I confess she does her best with everyone."

"Why do you say that about Mr. Waverley? You never were just to him," said Nina, not daring to strongly defend Frank, for her husband might take into his head to consider her dictum gospel. Frank must be under a cloud for a time."

"Oh, well," said Captain Herbert, carelessly, "I'm glad it seems off, that's all. He isn't good enough for her."

Nina smothered a laugh. What fun it would be when the time came to undeceive him! She was so bright all through the drive that he could not help believing she must be better; nor did she seem tired when he lifted her down at their own door. She went to lie down, it was true, but she talked to him, and her soft colour did not fade. That under-current of pain seemed lifted from him for this one evening. He said, "She would be able to go out again tomorrow;" and felt all the shock of disappointed hope when she shook her head at his question, "Should he drive her to-day?" on that morning he had looked forward to. He lingered by her side for a while, then went away to answer his letters, and when those were finished sat with his head in his hands, thinking moodily.

From this state he was roused by a friend privileged enough to march in and rally him on his gloom. Had he lost at cards, or had the Mantons frowned on him? To which Herbert answered, "Hang the Mantons! and he hadn't been playing; he'd been at home." His friend was going to choose a gun, would Herbert come with him, and they'd lunch at his rooms. Some other fellows would be there. So Alan shook off his despondency, or buried it out of sight of others, and went.

CHAPTER III.

"CARDS from Mrs. Manton," said Nina, the next morning at breakfast, "A dance next week. What is the good of sending them to me? You can go, of course, Alan."

"So can you a week hence, I daresay," said Captain Herbert, throwing the *Times* on the floor. "I suppose all the Forrester contingent are going!"

"Mamma and Agnes. I heard about it yesterday."

"Of course you did. Agnes came to consult you about her dress. I heard you. A lot about old lace and pearls."

"Very likely you did; but you've no business to interrupt me. I was going to say Mrs. Manton has fixed on the very night when papa will have to be at the House, and it's a mere chance if he gets away. It's rather short notice Mrs. Manton has given us all; the only thing is, it is not a big affair. I wonder now, is Lord Digby going," said she, reflectively.

"What put that in your head? He goes to a good many places."

"Mamma is so anxious about Agnes's dress, that's all."

"Isn't she always anxious?"

"Don't be provoking, Alan. I am following up a serious train of thought. However, if Agnes wears what I suggested she will look lovely."

"Have you turned matchmaker, too? You look too innocent for anything half so detectable."

"Never go by looks. I daresay I could plot as well as the best of you," said she, merrily. "I don't know but what matchmaking would be great fun."

"Yes, if you don't mind the responsibility of all the mistaken marriages. About this dance, Nina; you will try to go?"

"I'll show there at any rate," she said, coming round to him, and laying her hand on his shoulder, "just to please you."

Mrs. Manton lived in Park-lane. She herself was the daughter of a poor county family, and had married a few years ago previously a very wealthy man twice her age, who was reported to be "in business"; but all reports about him were rather vague. However, this did not prevent his wife shining in society, though Alan Herbert, exclusive, even in his unmarried days, had refused to visit much at her house while her husband lived. "I can't stand him," he would say, when rallied by his less fastidious friends. "I don't care a rush about his good table. He's no business to be amongst us. His wife's birth we all know; but she must rank with her husband."

When Mr. Manton was gathered to such fathers as he could boast of, however, the young officer condescended to notice the lady who had demeaned herself by marrying somebody nobody knew anything about; and her wit and good looks, as well as her magnificent house and entertainments, made their way when she was relieved of the dead weight of a husband who could not rise to the requirements of his position.

It had been said that she had looked with a very favourable eye on Alan Herbert, and that he might with ease have become master of the deceased "business" man's wealth. The irreverent persons who gathered round the mess-table of Her Majesty's Guards did say, when Herbert's approaching marriage was announced, that the Manton would put on her mourning again; and young Lord Digby added, laughing, it would be all the better if she did, as she could thereby complete the allotted term.

As it was shrewdly suspected that the lady had quickly resorted to brighter hues for the sake of one particular member of the regiment, Digby's remark raised a roar, in which everyone joined but the member implicated. Mrs. Manton, however, had been at his wedding with no signs of a broken heart; had been remarkably gracious to the bride, and one of the handsomest presents had been from her. She evidently bore no malice. She did not make much way with young Mrs. Herbert

though, and had once said it was a pity "poor Alan" had thrown himself away on such an invalid.

She knew best whether she was altogether pleased to see that young lady enter her drawing-rooms on the night of the dance, and looking so lovely that all the male heads went round, and the female eyes were busy to find out what sort of dress produced such an effect. It was easily found out. Nina's dress never had to be explored; its taste was always just. Her jewels were new—that the ladies discovered at once—and, indeed, Alan had brought them to her dressing-room not an hour ago. Lovely as Alice Forrester looked, her younger sister outshone her; and brilliant Mrs. Manton glanced involuntarily at herself in the tall mirror she passed.

"My dear child," said she, with *empressement*, "how very good of you to come—it is so seldom you honour any of us. I hope this is only a beginning. How charming Agnes is looking! Captain Herbert, you are no stranger here—you can find a partner for yourself. Nina, my love, you must come with me."

Herbert resigned his charge, whispering to her quickly she was to send for him the minute she wanted to go. The girl nodded, and took her hostess's arm. She enjoyed the animated scene and the lights and flowers, enjoyed in girlish fashion the sense of her own beauty and exquisite dress. She was very soon surrounded, and many begged for a dance.

"I don't think I shall dance at all," she said, "Mrs. Manton, I must not keep you from your duties—there is mamma," and her face lighted up—"I will go to her, please."

The hostess went off to receive fresh guests—there was a little cloud on her brow. Nina was taken to her mother on Lord Digby's arm, and as no one could persuade her to dance her little court drifted off. The girl was no flirt, but she was pleased to be so welcomed on this her first appearance in society for some weeks. Mrs. Forrester sat on a comfortable fauteuil. She had been rather a beauty, and was still handsome, looking almost too slight and young to be the mother of two grown-up girls.

"Well, my dear," she said, running her eye admiringly over her daughter—"here you are at last. And you won't dance? Alan has taken out Lady Lucy Fane."

"Has he? Where is Agnes? And is papa coming?"

"I am afraid not. Nina," lowering her voice, "somebody told me Mr. Waverley was here. Have you seen him?"

That wicked Nina!—her eyes danced.

"I haven't seen him, but he is one of the dancing men, so I expect Mrs. Manton has secured him. Mamma, do you think you have been quite wise to refuse Frank so positively?"

"Why, Nina, I made up my mind and you approved of my action," said her mother. "Alan doesn't like him much, and of course you think with him."

There was no "of course" about it. Nina was more independent than her mother had ever been, and held her own opinions, whatever her husband's were. But she was not going to say so. Happily, Mrs. Forrester went on before the girl could speak,—

"I have nothing to say against him personally, but the child would be quite throwing herself away. His expectations are very prospective,"—and here the lady's eyes followed Lord Digby, as he passed at a little distance with Agnes on his arm—he bending towards her, she smiling a little.

Nina's eyes followed them too—the mystery of her mother's anxiety about the dress was solved as she had half suspected.

"I didn't know you thought of that, mamma," said she, in a low voice. "It's a new thing on his part."

"I should be very pleased," said Mrs. Forrester, contentedly; "and I think Agnes would like it. She is not so much in love with Mr. Waverley as she thinks. Dear me, there he is! Nina, if you get the chance, do give your sister a hint."

"Oh, she will not dance with him," said Nina,

confidently (for had not it been agreed among the three conspirators as a general plan?) "Mamma dear, it's fortunate for you all that when I was married nobody wanted to oppose me. I don't think I should have been very obedient."

"No, I'm afraid not." Here Digby came up with Agnes, she flushed and smiling—and a glance of intelligence passed between the sisters. Mrs. Forrester, poor thing, laid it all down to the young Guardsman's fascinations. The two girls carried on a perfect series of telegraphic communications, in which the plan of campaign for the evening was arranged.

Agnes did not dance at all with Frank Waverley—he never asked it—but that some sort of messages were exchanged there was no doubt.

Later in the evening, Agnes, having found her way to a cool boudoir, was fanning herself after a dance, when a shadow falling across her made her look up, to see Frank Waverley. They were alone—for how long, who could tell? The girl got up quickly. "Frank!" she said, glancing round half-terrified—but the young man came forward and took her hands in his.

"Agnes," said he, earnestly, "forgive me for following you—perhaps it was not wise, but I could not help it. Everyone in the room has had a chance to speak to you, save me—I mayn't even ask you for one dance—I must touch you, see you just once. That puppy Digby will take you to supper—he has been hanging about you all the evening."

"I can't help it, Frank; indeed, mamma would be angry if I snubbed him, and might guess something."

"Ab, Agnes—when will you end this? It is a false game we are playing," said Waverley. "I am heart-sick of it!"

"I don't know," she whispered. "I have thought about it, and it seems impossible."

"Why? Have you told Mrs. Herbert?"

"No."

"Will you tell her? Say yes, darling—say it quickly—some one is coming."

"Let me go then, Frank," said Agnes, hurriedly, but he held her still. She knew then that she must make the promise if she did not want the intruder to see her standing with her hands in Frank Waverley's.

"Yes, yes," she said—"oh, please go!" She stepped away from him and glanced nervously towards the door, whereat looked a pretty face set in curly hair.

"How imprudent!" said the voice that was too sweet to belong to anyone but Nina. "Frank, go at once, mamma will be asking for Agnes. Oh, it's only me—you needn't look so scared both of you! I guessed you were here and I really must protest."

"It was my fault, Mrs. Herbert," said Frank, penitently.

"I know that. The man is sure to be in fault—only he hasn't always the grace to acknowledge it. I think you had better leave—I am going myself, and I can't trust you. I shall be in terror all night."

"Oh, no!" cried Frank. "I will not transgress again, but don't tell me to go. Mrs. Herbert, you are awfully hard-hearted!"

"Am I? I am awfully tired," said she, weakly, "and I want to get hold of my husband—"

"I'll find him!" said Waverley, eagerly.

"No, that won't do! He mustn't know you have come from this room, and find Agnes here. Give me your arm, and I'll drop a hint to Lord Digby, and he's sure to find his way here."

"I call that hard!" murmured poor Frank.

"It's very hard," said Nina, kindly; "but we shall laugh at it one day. Good-bye, Agnes."

She and her escort re-entered the ball-room at a door near which Nina knew Lord Digby to be seated, and while Frank went to look for Herbert the girl talked to her sister's new lover, and just as her husband came up, Digby left the saloon.

"You want to go home!" said Captain Herbert to his wife. "I'll send for your wrap."

"Thanks! But, Alan, you needn't come too. I only sent for you because you told me to. If you'll just put me in the carriage that will do. I

can slip away so easily while they are all dancing, but I won't have you come. Will you say everything proper to Mrs. Manton?"

"All right, deary. I am sorry you can't stop," he said, as a servant brought her cloak, and leading her outside, he wrapped it round her. "But you have enjoyed it, Nina?"

"Yes, a great deal!"

He saw her into the carriage, watched it drive off, and as he came back to the ball-room, met Mrs. Manton face to face.

"What?" he said, "you not dancing?"

"I might retort," said the lady, as he drew her hand on to his arm. "Where has the prince of waltzers been?"

"Sending my wife home, Mrs. Manton. She was tired, and begged me to make her adieu. But cannot that waltz tempt you? or cannot I tempt you?"

"Do you think you are quite irresistible?" said she, looking up at him coquettishly with eyes that had sparkled more brightly since his answer about Nina. "Let us go into the corridor, it is cool and quiet."

Thither they went, being almost its only occupants. It was lighted with wax tapers, which shed a warm effulgence on the statues placed at intervals along the walls.

Mrs. Manton and her companion paced silently to the end of the gallery. Silence was effective; she considered, under the circumstances, and he was not studying effects at all. She rallied him as they turned.

"Your thoughts—where were they?" she said, with gentle interest. "If you were not already married, I should say you were in love."

Alan laughed a little. In truth, he had been thinking uneasily of Nina, but Mrs. Manton was the last person to whom he would have confessed it.

"You are very good to pardon my abstraction," he said, in his usual way. "Perhaps I respected your silence, or am I alone to be the sinner?"

"That depends on your real motives. Tell me what they were and I will decide. You are fond of metaphysics."

"But not here."

"Ah!" said she, with a slight blush, "I think you have a subtle way of flattery, Captain Herbert; you leave so much unsaid!"

But Alan was not quite sure whether he had meant entirely to flatter.

"I thought," she began, after a pause, "that Frank Waverley was taken with your sister-in-law, but that seems to be otherwise. Lord Digby was the devoted servant to-night."

"Yes, I thought he was dancing with her pretty often. Digby is a fine fellow!"

"You would like such a match! He is a brother officer, isn't he?"

"Yes; Waverley seems to have given the thing up!"

A slight touch of contempt came unconsciously into his voice, but he changed the subject. He did not fancy discussing his sister with anyone.

"You are coming to Richmond with us tomorrow?" she asked, sweetly.

"Thanks, very much! I can't promise, Mrs. Manton. I half engaged to row to Henley with Fred Warner."

"Well, that will be charming; row back to Richmond. You keep your boat at Teddington, don't you? and join us at the Star and Garter; then we can all drive back together."

One second Alan hesitated; that would be to leave Nina alone till ten o'clock at least. Then he reflected—anyhow he would not be home till eight or nine; it was only an hour or two more, and he would not go out again. So he consented cordially, any qualms of conscience being silenced by remembering that Nina never liked him to stay at home on her account.

Mrs. Manton felt some triumph; she gave no sympathy to the young wife's unuttered longings for a little more of the presence she loved best.

She had not the power of realising how Nina would listen through the livelong day for the one step and voice; but she knew she ought not to use disloyally her woman's influence, and she was elated that she had. There was some pleasure in hurting a rival.

But, if she could have read Alan's heart as clearly as she imagined she could, she would have seen that it was more his love of pleasure than clouded his finer nature than any feeling for her, however innocent, or any yielding to her influence.

CHAPTER IV.

It speedily became rumoured in society that the eldest Miss Forrester would fill a more exalted position than her sister; it was pretty plain that Lord Digby was a very devoted admirer, much to Agnes's dismay.

He haunted the Forrester establishment, and somehow seemed to get scent of every place Agnes went to—anyhow he was sure to be there; but then what cannot a man do backed by the powers that be?

Frank had had none of these advantages, and it had been all the more enterprising in him to know as much as he did of Miss Forrester's movements.

At present he was obliged to hold aloof; to see her sometimes with Lord Digby, to hear a hundred times of their probable engagement.

Agnes was spirited, and she made an effort to break free of this perpetual companionship; she snubbed the inoffensive young man so vigorously that mamma interfered—and, indeed, there was quite a scene in the Forrester mansion. Agnes did not cry—neither of the girls were addicted to that vent for feminine feeling—but she flared out in a passion that took her mother aback.

"I hate Lord Digby!" said this energetic young lady. "I will snub him a hundred times if he will always hang about me! He dances abominably, he can't talk, he doesn't like music; I hate him!"

"Agnes, I am ashamed of you! Lord Digby is an excellent dancer, everyone says so; he talks better than any young man of his age. As to music, you can't live on that."

"I can't live without it. Fancy to have a husband who wants you to shut up your piano, and thinks it a bore to go to a classical concert!"

"My dear, everyone is not music mad," said mamma, with aggravating soothing. Agnes, in a rage with tumbled hair, looked very pretty, but it wouldn't do. "And really he has a right to his chance."

"It isn't a fair chance," said Agnes, thinking bitterly of Frank's few chances. "He must see, too, if he is not blind, that I am sick of it all—that I'd rather have he had gone to Timbuctoo or the diggings than see him in every single house I go to. He is always here—morning, noon, and night. He is on the Row when I am there; and if I go into the country to escape him he turns up. I see through it, mamma, it's plain enough, but it's no use, I'll not marry him."

"Wait till he asks you, my dear," was the cold reply.

Agnes crimsoned; but she recovered herself in a minute.

"If he doesn't mean to," she retorted, readily, "he has no business to behave as he does, that's all."

"My dear Agnes, you surprise me, I had no idea you would go on like this. I am sure I don't want you to marry anyone if you don't like, but I can't stop Lord Digby coming."

"Then I'll stop him."

"Stay, Agnes," said her mother, commandingly, "I will have no such rebellion. So long as you are under my roof my guests must be yours and treated as such."

"I shall not be uncivil, I shall ignore him."

"Well, Agnes, you know whether you prefer poverty or wealth. Mr. Waverley can give you one, and Lord Digby the other. Poverty is bearable in some classes, in ours it is extinction."

"Mr. Waverley is not poor, mamma. He is very nearly as well off as we are."

"My daughter can look higher, and I hope will not disappoint me. Believe me, Agnes," said she, softening, "love matches are not always the happiest. Marriage has so many sides, and there are solid advantages to look to as well as love. You are young and believe yourself in love,

but when you are older you will value rank and influence."

"Without love?" the girl asked.

"You need not be without it; but love is not all."

"Perhaps not; but no marriage is tolerable without it. The sort of happiness you mean, mamma, would be misery to me. I could not live on such modified affection."

"Yet a good deal of the love that exists so strongly, dwindles down into that," said Mrs. Forrester, so sadly that the girl asked gently,—

"Mother, are you thinking of anyone in particular?"

"Of—Nina, as I have often thought before."

"Of Nina!" repeated Agnes in supreme astonishment; "why, Alan adores her."

"Yes, now; but I see very well he is learning unconsciously, I believe, to find his happiness apart from her, away from his home. He does not think what he is drifting to; he is too thoughtless, and Nina too young, but it will end in estrangement, if there is not something to pull him up. I daresay it is partly the sort of weakness some men have; that he cannot bear to have her ill-health palpably brought before him, and while he seems to be seeking only pleasure, is really trying to escape from himself. So you see love is not a panoply nothing can abhor."

"I don't know!" said Agnes, stoutly. "I don't believe anything would make Alan think less of her. He would pull himself up before he went too far from her to return. You see, mamma, he talks to me, and I know him so well. He is really happiest when he is with her."

"Pity he doesn't try more often to be happy then," said the elder lady, dryly. "A little experience will tone down your romance, Agnes. I wish you had it now, for you would see that a man like Lord Digby, who can offer what he can, is not recklessly to be cast aside. I would never throw in your way a man of evil life—he is not that, he is quite as good as—"

"Frank Waverley, mamma," said Agnes, quietly; "isn't that what you meant to say? But he is not Frank Waverley. And there he is, that's his knock!" she sprang up.

"Agnes, where are you going?" called Mrs. Forrester, as the girl opened the door.

"To escape Lord Digby, mamma. Please tell me when he's gone," and with a saucy smile she vanished, and flitted upstairs just as the visitor began to ascend from the hall.

Nina heard both versions of this scene, save that part concerning herself, and had to steer a middle course with her mother. Agnes she advised to take Lord Digby's attentions quietly; she could but refuse him when the time came; and Agnes accepted her advice, without having the courage to broach to her that daring proposal of Frank's.

She thought of it very often though, and every time she saw Nina remembered her promise to tell her; but she was afraid of her being shocked. So she held her tongue.

And, meanwhile, a little thorn was planted in poor Nina's flowerly life garden.

In her sugary way, Mrs. Manton said to Captain Herbert at the theatre one night,—

"I am so glad dear Nina is getting stronger. She sees a little more society, I hear."

"I am sorry you have been misinformed," answered Herbert. "Nina has not been quite so well lately, and has been nowhere."

"But she has received at home her friends, I mean."

"Scerely anyone."

"Oh! then it was only gossip, I suppose," said the lady; "dear me, people never can be let alone. Only fancy! somebody told me, I forgot who, that—. Oh! but how stupid I am; it must have been you, of course, whom my informant saw."

"I am really quite in the dark," said Captain Herbert, with some impatience in his heart. "I suppose more likely it was Dr. Wilton those good people saw; unhappily he comes oftener than I like. But, really, I can't see what it concerns the opposite neighbours who my wife receives."

"Oh, dear no! Besides, she must have some

little amusement. She can't get it from home, and a chatty, pleasant visitor, man or woman, is cheering to an invalid. If it was only Dr. Wilton, however—who is a dear, delightful creature, but not very fascinating—I am afraid poor Nina was not much enlivened."

"I assure you, you are mistaken," said Herbert, laughing! "she flirts with him outrageously. Ladies always make pets of their doctors, don't they?"

"Oh, you bad fellow!" said she, with a little reproving tap of her fan, "to laugh at us poor women! Don't go now," for he put back his chair, "I am not very angry with you."

"I hope not—I should not survive that," said Herbert, and she looked at him. If it had been possible, she might have imagined a sarcasm in his voice, but the beautiful Mrs. Manton to be answered at, ridiculous! "I am going to be a good boy and finish the evening in domestic fashion."

"But, my dear Captain Herbert, it's ten o'clock! You won't have any time left, and Nina, really," she laughed, "she keeps hours I never heard of for an invalid!"

"Awake or asleep, Mrs. Manton, whichever I find her, I promised to go back early."

"There," said she, turning with eagerness to the stage as the band struck up, "that charming waltz, how I love it!" And her fan and her head kept time to the music.

"Good-night, Mrs. Manton," said Alan's low voice, close beside her.

"Oh, dear, I had quite forgotten you. What an excellent reformed character you are becoming," she said, with an arch, upward glance, half-mocking, too. A very young man would have dropped again into the chair beside her.

Alan winced a little; he was not thirty, and a pretty woman's ridicule was not palatable, but he only answered gravely,—

"Don't you think it is time?"

"Well, I don't know. Now, are you quite sure you made that promise to Nina?"

"Quite," said Alan, with an involuntary smile in his grey eyes. Did he not remember the kiss that had been his reward?

"Because," said the lady, "I begin to think my harmless little gossip has frightened you!"

"Dear Mrs. Manton," said he, lightly, "I am the most miserable of men. What have you seen in me to think me capable of two such meannesses? Will you come and see Nina to-morrow, and she will vouch for my truth?"

"Do you know this play?" she said, ignoring his question, "that you are so careless of seeing the end of it? It's such an exciting story, and I have been told the *dénouement* takes one's breath away!"

"That's quite enough then. I don't want to give up the ghost just yet. There, the curtain is gone up—once more, good-night."

She had a clinging way of letting her hand rest in that of the man who might be holding it, if she chose. She did choose to-night, and said good-bye softly, turning her head pensively aside. Herbert was not behindhand in arts. As adroitly as he held her fingers the regulation time, and dropped them without giving the idea of a repulse.

A hansom took him to Hill-street speedily, and as he sprang from it the door opened and Frank Waverley came down the steps. Each man uttered the other's name and shook hands, made a few remarks, and Frank entered the discarded hansom, while Captain Herbert passed into the house and up to the brilliantly-lighted drawing-room.

Only Nina was there, and she turned at the sound or the closing door and sprang forward.

"Oh! Alan—you have kept your promise!"

It was such a joyously glad voice, such loving hands that clung about him, Alan was too touched to do more than caress her at first, and then ask tenderly,—

"Why, sweetheart, do you think I am bad enough to forget a promise—and to you?"

"Oh! no—but time slips away so, and one meets friends. You did not mind leaving the theatre?"

"If I had, the welcome you gave me would have been more than compensation!"

She certainly made home charming. The few hours of the evening that remained were sweet enough to set him wondering vaguely why he missed so much—why he endured senseless talk and stupid sameness, condemning them and yet submitting to them. But the morrow came, and yet other morrows, and his time was spent as usual. He remembered afterwards two things about that evening above all else—that he had forgotten to tell Nina he had met Frank, and that she never mentioned him at all.

CHAPTER V.

Mrs. FORRESTER was not a very clever woman, and she was apt to take things as she saw them, and to think they meant all they seemed to mean, so that when her daughter suffered Lord Digby's attentions without protest, she imagined it was the beginning of the end, and that the close of the session would find Agnes Lady Digby. She never connected Nina with any phase of the affair. She took it, as some people will, as a matter of course that the girl agreed tacitly with her, although she took no overt part in the affair, and she would talk to her as if it was not in the region of possibilities that there should be a difference of view.

Nina, rather hypocritically, it must be confessed, accepted the position, but kept within the lines of truth—she gave no false impressions.

Mrs. Forrester now thought it high time to bring a little external aid to bear. She was not romantic, but she knew girls were, and a water-party, coming home by moonlight, &c., would expedite matters. She communicated this idea to Nina, who heard her in silence, while she arranged fresh flowers in the vases in the drawing-room, with her head first on one side, then on the other.

"Don't you think it a good plan, my dear?" concluded mamma.

"Yes, from your point of view, but if there were love in the case I don't think it would need poetical scenes to make them find it out. You never thought of those things with me, mamma."

"No—there was no need—you were hardly more than presented before you were engaged, and your father and I were only too delighted."

"It seems so dreadful," said Nina; "like putting a girl up for sale—showing her off in the best light. Mamma, do let it alone."

"And Agnes grew into an old maid because of Frank Waverley! Already she seems more kindly disposed towards Lord Digby. I have told her a first love is never lasting, and she would not believe me. But it is half fancy."

"Mamma," said Nina, with a glow in her blue eyes as she fixed them on her mother; "did you think that when you let me marry? You say Agnes has found it out while she is free—what if I had found it out when I was bound?"

"My dear child," said Mrs. Forrester, kindly, for she saw there was a great deal of suppressed feeling in the girl's manner, "I did not think there was any risk. Whether it was fancy or love I did not ask—and you would not have known; but a girl, once married, will love her husband quite well enough, even if she has only had a fancy before."

"Mamma, do you know I don't think you understand Agnes and me—'quite well enough' to us would be a death in life. If I had married with no real love I should not hate my husband, because it would not be his fault, but I should hate myself and the bond that joined us."

"No, my love, I don't think you would. You are nineteen, and vehement in your feelings, but when you saw what money and a place in the world could do, you would be very well content."

"Oh, mamma," cried Nina, "content might be happiness to you—it wouldn't be to us. And what a pitiful thing as one grows older to give up the very essence of our youth. One can be young while one loves, but to be scared in heart is to be old before our time."

"What is Nina holding forth about so

eloquently!" said a voice at the door, and the girl gave a sudden start.

She was vexed she had said so much to her mother, but her husband's good-humoured railing never hurt her.

She smiled.

"I had got on my high horse," said she, "and I am afraid poor mamma is disgusted. She is talking of a water-party, and wanted to know my opinion."

"Which you have not given me, my dear," said the elder lady; "but instead held forth in a very fine peroration."

"Well, mamma, I don't think it would do any harm," said Nina, who, rapidly considering, came to the conclusion that a proposal from Lord Digby would be like a thunderstorm—it would clear the air.

"Any harm!" repeated her husband, "what does the child mean? What an odd way to put it, Nina."

"My dear boy," said the young lady, patronisingly, "do be quiet. You don't in the least understand what you are talking about."

Mrs. Forrester laughed at her daughter. Alan said meekly, retiring to a distant sofa, and taking up a book,

"After that set-down, of course, I am extinguished."

"Poor fellow!" said Nina, "when we want you we'll call upon you."

Thereupon ensued some low-voiced conversation between the ladies, and Herbert was presently told "to come here."

"You see, you can't get on without me," he said, as he obeyed; and, indeed, they could not.

He knew all about the river and the launches, and was finally entrusted with that branch of the affair.

The day fixed on happened to be a brilliant one, and everyone was in high spirits.

The party was well selected, the launch commodious, and the culinary department unexceptionable; the only person who was secretly uneasy was Miss Forrester; she saw through the whole manoeuvres, though her sister had not broken confidence. But she was too much a young lady of the world to seem other than light-hearted.

She was very kind to Lord Digby, but she skilfully evaded any *tête-à-têtes*, wouldn't be sentimental, and reduced to the common-place all his rhapsodies about the beauties of tree and sky.

Mrs. Forrester thought things were going on well. Nina saw deeper and knew better.

Alan, man-like, was rather deceived; the wish might be father to the thought, for he and Digby had been comrades in the recent war, for which they had both volunteered, and he wished his brother officer success.

It was a delightful day thoroughly enjoyed; but, as Nina said to her mother, when for a minute they were alone,—

"It has had no effect!"

"I don't know," responded mamma, "he has said nothing; but, remember, it is Agnes I want to influence."

And Agnes had been thinking all day of absent slighted Frank.

And Alan Herbert had been thinking in a very perplexed way, half annoyed, half contemptuous, partly of Nina, partly of someone, who, perhaps, was nobody at all, just because of a few words he had heard behind him as he strolled down to the launch after a ramble with Mrs. Manton at his side. A lady's voice said confidently,—

"Oh, no; it wasn't Captain Herbert."

"Quite sure!" asked a man's voice.

The pair evidently forgot they might be heard by quick ears. Here Alan lost some; besides, Mrs. Manton spoke to him, and he had to answer her, but presently there came in soprano, with a laugh,—

"Oh, no, always the same dear little prude! so they told me!"

"Who told you?"

"Oh, fie! you should never ask that; besides, I really don't know. Two or three have said"—a blank here—then, "Yes, very imprudent!"

"Hush!" in basso, "he'll hear."

"Oh!" in a frightened whisper.

Captain Herbert turned his head ever so little;

but enough to know that the couple behind were Lady Mary Danvers and one of the greatest club-haunters in town.

He bit his lips in vexation, and ungallantly wished Mrs. Manton further with her prattling nothings.

Who was imprudent? Not Nina! Why was he not to hear? And he remembered what Mrs. Manton had said to him at the ball ten days ago.

The trip was not cloudless pleasure to him, except when Nina's happy eyes looked into his, as he settled her comfortably in her place in his mal-photon on the return journey.

Driving through the soft evening air, he bent down to ask her if she had enjoyed the day.

"Very much," said Nina! "and I think—" she stopped.

It was stupid, perhaps, after a year's marriage, to feel his pulse quicken at the thought that sprang to his heart at that pause.

"I was going to say," said Nina, with a little hesitation, "that this is one of the happiest parts of the day!"

"Why?" half under his breath.

"Because I am with you, I suppose," she said, brightly. "It doesn't need anything but that to make me happy!"

He smiled back at her as utterly content as she was—sure for that momentary self-reproach that was apt to make itself felt at any such words from her; but the gossip of the afternoon had gone out of his memory. "Imprudence" could have no connection with Nina.

That uneasiness of his was only laid to rest, not uprooted. It sprang up again at a careless jest that was repeated to him, and he laughed it off. That was some days after the river trip, and there had been grand consultations in the little boudoir in Hill-street, and Frank Waverley had been there more often than before. Lord Digby had been there too, and Alan knew of his coming; no doubt it was he the gossip spoke of.

But a few chance allusions, a breath, a look from one or the other, showed him Lord Digby was not meant. Then he was indignant, not with Nina, but with the stupid babblers that could not let a woman receive the same guest twice without hinting at scandal.

"Nina may be doing something not quite worldly wise," he thought, "but that is all; and I shall not insult her by saying a word. Poor little one! she would open her great blue eyes at me in wonderment!"

There was a minute given up to irrelevant musing on the blue eyes, after which his thoughts reverted with an unpleasant suddenness to a very palpable shortcoming of his. If Nina, only nineteen, had found an innocent pleasure in this guest's companionship (and that it was other than innocent never crossed his mind) who was to blame but himself?

She was so much alone; she must be so often depressed, longing for a little bright talk from some one who could sympathise, but was strong and well. Who could give that but her husband?

There was the usual trooping of the colours that June morning, and Captain the Hon. Alan Herbert bore his part in the gallant pageant as usual, looking every inch the soldier in his splendid uniform; but glancing his eyes wistfully along the balconies and windows crowded with lovely faces, but not the one he wanted.

"Too tired," she had said to him that morning. Was she wearing away these hours as best she might? he thought, while his horse pranced and curvetted, and the bands crashed, and the crowds cheered. There was not a sorer heart under one of those glittering breast-plates than that of this man, who could not help but repeat to himself, no matter what other sounds he heard, some words he had said a year ago: "To love and cherish, in sickness and health!"

He, a soldier, would hold himself dishonoured if he broke by one tittle his oath to his Queen. Had he kept quite so strictly an oath more binding still?

Pleasure-loving he might be, and was, but he was honest. Gravé with a new resolve he rode home when the trooping was over.

CHAPTER VI.

THAT very morning Nina Herbert heard for the first time what she considered Frank's astounding proposal. She was anything but well, but she started to her feet from her sofa with all the alacrity of bounding health.

Her own marriage and the marriages of all the people she had ever known had been performed in orthodox fashion. To run away in a cab to a city church—to endure the talk of society!

"Impossible!" said she, with awful emphasis, looking straight at Agnes.

"Oh, Nina, don't say that till you hear all. What else can we do? I'm afraid every day of my life that tiresome Dibby will say something, and I must refuse him. I can't evade him much longer, and when I do say no, mamma will be so angry."

"But, Agnes," said the younger girl, "how can you brave the world like that?"

"Wouldn't you have done it for Alan?"

"Ah!" said Nina, softly, with such a light in her eyes, "for him!"

"Well, would I do less for Frank? Isn't it hard that I see him so seldom!—that he is shut out from our circle almost entirely, Nina," Agnes said, kneeling by her sister. "Help us in this! It is only one step further. Are you afraid of Alan—or of mamma?"

"A little of mamma, not of Alan," said Nina parting her sister's hair from her forehead thoughtfully; "he might be vexed, but it wouldn't last. But the *esclandre*! And mamma hasn't an idea about me; she will blame me so! Must I help? Is it a *sine qua non*?"

"You are married, you have a status of your own; you will say so much of the talk."

"Yes, I know; but I can't decide yet, Agnes. It seems to shock me."

"Well, say nothing now; we will wait still," said Agnes, impulsively. "I won't have you worried for all the Franks in existence. I am going now. Oh, thank Alan for that ticket for the trooping; I gave it to Etta. I hadn't the heart to go. I know the bands would have made me cry."

She put on her hat hastily, kissed her sister, and went out; and Nina, sinking back, hid her face in the cushions.

How miserable poor Agnes was! How selfish she was herself! And yet not altogether. How would her husband care to have her discussed in connection with a runaway match? But would people talk so much? Was there not generally sympathy with the runaways?

Nina was so young, and had been so shut out from the world for the last year, that she had to ask herself questions, and could not answer them. If she could take advice—but who was to give it? Mrs. Manton she distrusted, and rather disliked; she had no friends close enough to confide in, and the one being on whom she relied must know nothing.

She began to find she had embarked herself on an unknown sea, and was a little frightened. Her husband's light step on the stair diverted her thoughts, but it passed her door—of course he had gone to change his dress. Nina sat up, she must not be the invalid for the brief time he would be with her; so when he came in she was ready with questions as to the morning's doings, and gave him Agnes's message.

"I looked out for her," he said, "and so did someone else. Why didn't she go? Danced too much last night? Wyndham told me she hardly sat down."

"Didn't she?" said Nina, taking advantage of the last remark to ignore his question. "Who looked out for her—Dibby? I thought soldiers on duty were supposed to see no one."

"Oh, of course they do though," he answered, laughing. "And you know it of old, Nina."

Nina was rested enough by the evening to come down to dinner, to which Herbert, who had been riding in the afternoon, brought a friend. This gentleman went away soon after, and Nina looked up surprised when her husband came into the drawing-room.

"I thought you were going out with Mr. Anstey," she said, laying down her book. "I had no engagement with him."

"But you had to Lady Edith's 'at home.' " "Her 'at homes' are awfully slow; and I made no promise."

Nina glanced at him; she was too glad for him to stay to make a martyr of herself, and force him to go.

Besides, she was seldom up late, and he could do what he liked with the hours after she had gone to her room. She brightened up visibly, poor child; it seemed like the early married days in Italy.

"I think I must take you to Italy again," Herbert said, as if he half divined her thought, as he sat down by her. "You have a dread of it; but it would do you good. You don't get stronger here."

Nina nestled up to him silently. It was vaguely in her mind that strength would come more steadily if there were fewer dull days.

"What do you say, sweetheart? You get little enough pleasure out of the season," said Herbert. "Shall we change your doctor?"

"Oh, no, he is clever, and I like him so dear old man. He says I shall not get strong quickly anywhere."

"Oh, doctors say anything," Alan said, half impatiently. "He said that a year ago."

"Well, I believe him, Alan, and I like being near father and mother and Agnes."

"That settles it, then;" and he left the subject.

Nina went to her room that night with less longing for rest than usual. She had a happy recollection of the evening just over, and lay awake a long while thinking it over. To her surprise, though, that was not the last evening so spent. Once or twice, too, Alan asked in the morning if he might write his letters in her boudoir, and he was altogether more in and out.

The girl's spirits grew less depressed; her whole life took a new colour, until one day Mrs. Manton called, and chattered away for ten minutes.

"You are looking better, my love! Positively a little colour on those transparent cheeks! What have you been doing?"

"Nothing," said Nina, the colour deepening as she thought whose doing it was.

The lady's sharp eye saw that sign of pleasure, which she mistook for confusion. She rose to go.

"Remember me to that husband of yours. I haven't seen him so much lately."

"I suppose he is getting tired of gauity," said Nina, with a touch of coldness.

Mrs. Manton felt that too, and gave a Roland for her Oliver.

"Ah!" she said, laughing, "I daresay he thinks you want a little more looking after, and, indeed, you seem ever so much better. Good-bye, dear!"

Nina stood still on the spot where her guest had left her, absolutely cold with anger and the thought that flashed like a knife through her. The *double entendre* had been unmistakable to her quick sense.

Half dashed she pressed her hands to her forehead. What had they been saying of her? What had Alan? What did he know! He could not doubt her. What did it all mean? She almost sprang to the dainty writing-table.

"Well, I will end it all," she said. "Frank shall come no more. I will have no secrets—I will tell Alan."

And she dashed off impetuously a line to Agnes to send Frank to her at such an hour the next day—an hour for which she knew her husband had an engagement.

She calmed down when that was despatched but it was too late, had she wished it, to recall it. She even laughed at her own indignation with Mrs. Manton; and, as to her husband, comforted herself with the impossibility of his imagining for a moment that she was doing anything to be in the least ashamed of.

If he thought she was flirting unduly he would have told her so. Whatever had produced his change of front, it was no mistrust of her.

Yet she could not quite feel the old unclouded enjoyment in his more constant presence. There was a shadow somewhere, but her tongue was tied. Oh, if she had never mixed herself up in anything she could not tell him!

That next afternoon was sunny, and as ill-luck would have it, Herbert asked her at luncheon if she would drive over with him to see a match at Lord's. Nina would have delighted in it, but she shook her head.

"I thought you felt better to-day?" said Alan, unable to help a touch of disappointment in his tone.

Nina flushed up.

"It isn't that," she said, falteringly, turning her face away—she did not want him to see the tears in her eyes. "I can't come to-day, Alan dear!"

"Never mind," he said, kindly, "I must hope to have you another day. The fact is, I was engaged to go out with a fellow, but he wrote to put me off, so I found myself free. I think I'll go for an hour or two; they say it will be such a close finish."

Nina sat still, with her face averted, and without a word.

Alan thought she seemed unlike herself, and while he got ready for the drive to St. John's Wood, worried over it and had half a mind to remain. But no; to his sensitive honour that would seem like watching her.

"And yet," he thought, taking up his gloves, "if she has got into any difficulty, she is too young to be left to get out of it by herself. But pooh! what nonsense! She would have come to me if there were any such difficulty. I fancy things like a girl!" And he went to bid his young wife good-bye. She watched him drive off, her seat beside him vacant, and could have cried like a child, she was so miserable.

Later on, Mr. Waverley was announced, and Nina at once opened the subject.

"I will give in," she said, "and help you to the end. You must make all arrangements and I will come with Agnes. I didn't like it at all at first, Frank."

"But now, dear Mrs. Herbert," said the young man, gratefully, "you see that nothing else can be done. Why, though, need we involve you? Captain Herbert may justly be angry, and Mrs. Forrester will certainly be."

"No, Alan is very good," she said, hurriedly, "he will not say much to me; it is possible"—smiling—"he may to you; but you must risk that for Agnes's sake. Frank, you must never let me regret this. I have my doubts. I have had no one to advise me, and Agnes and I are like one. You must love her always, very dearly."

He took her hands; his face was very earnest. "What man can do, with Heaven's help, I will do!" he said, and his voice shook a little.

"Thank you," she said, gently. "I know you will, Hark!"—her cheek turned pale—"there is Alan; how soon he is back!" Her heart sank—when had it sunk before at the sound of the loved voice!—what had brought him back so early? "Frank, go into that little room, he musn't see you."

"But," began Frank, whose chivalry and pride resented this hiding as if he were doing wrong, "he won't shoot me or kick me out!"

"No—no!" said she, quickly, and half laughing: "but he musn't see you, he will guess. Go—go! I won't help you if you don't. Leave by the other door; we shall tell everything in a little while."

A servant below had told Herbert that her mistress, she thought, had visitors, she did not know who, and her master did not ask; but when he entered the room no one but Nina was there.

She seemed a little flurried, and asked him what had brought him back, as if she hardly knew what she was saying. The explanation was simple enough. The match, as they sometimes will, had come to an end more suddenly than was expected, and he was going away, when Nina awoke to the necessity of detaining him. Frank could hardly have left the house.

Herbert could not help thinking more than he liked of that refusal of Nina's, and the manner of it. Then her way when he returned was a little unusual. She had not exclaimed with the glad sparkle he looked for. "How early you

are!" but instead had asked, "What makes you so early?"

Poor Nina was too much of a child to play her part to perfection. She was worried and doubtful; and *contretemps*, which would have made her laugh a week ago, vexed her now.

Again his fears were disarmed, however, when in the course of the afternoon Nina recovered her spirits, and asked him to take her to the Richter concert, and seemed to have quite thrown off her variableness. He did not know how she longed for the probation to be over.

CHAPTER VII.

TEN days yet before this runaway match, that in vision Nina beheld the sport of tea-tables and clubs. There were arrangements to be made, difficulties to be considered; and none of these could be made and surmounted without time and thought.

Meanwhile, Nina flagged in health and spirits under the nervous fear of a *contretemps* and the soreness that underlay her pleasure in her husband's more constant society. The poison had been inserted, and it worked silently.

She concealed her uneasiness from Agnes and Frank. She was determined not to be stopped in her determination to lead her countenance to them openly.

Then Alan got anxious about her, and talked more than once of taking her to another physician. She refused gently, but steadily.

"There was nothing the matter with her—she always fluctuated," and as this was true, he was silenced.

Quite unconsciously, too, he sometimes perplexed Nina; she dared not let Frank come, and once or twice it was rather necessary that he should.

But she had to run the risk when it came to discussing the day for the marriage. This day Agnes could not manage—that day Nina was engaged.

Finally, they hit on a morning that would do for all, and Nina breathed freely as Frank left the house.

Agnes kissed and thanked her without an idea there might be any trouble.

"You will have nothing to do but to come home, Nina, and tell Alan if you like; and I shall write to mamma from Folkestone—you need not bear the brunt—or, I think I'll write to papa first. Ab, me! I wonder if we are doing right!"

"They won't mind when once it is done," said Nina; "besides, I couldn't bear for you to be so unhappy. I hope it will all go right!"

"So do I. I think we shall all be glad when it is over," said Agnes, sighing. "Some girls think it fun to be married like this. I'm sure I don't."

When the morning came, Nina was in a fever of anxiety as to her husband's movements. At breakfast she tried to get at what they were. He didn't know—he had to go down to the barracks directly, but that wouldn't take him long. After that he was uncertain. Nina had to rest content with that.

After all it did not much matter—she might be back before he was, and if not she could explain at once. The only thing was she never went out in the morning, and this morning was at anything but her best. She felt dead tired, but her blue eyes burned, and her colour came and went fitfully.

She blessed that business at the barracks, else she would never have been allowed to cross the threshold. As it was, she was afraid of every lapse in the talk, in case he should advise her to keep quiet.

She said to him as he was going,—

"You mustn't come straight back because of me, Alan."

"You don't look in the least fit to be left," he answered; "and I wouldn't if I could help it."

"There is nothing the matter," she said, restlessly.

He would not say he thought there was, but, instead, asked jestingly,—

"Do you want to get rid of me?"

It was so true that she did not know what to say or how to look. She was too truthful to say "no," yet in one sense she did not want to get rid of him.

She said at last,—

"Oh! Alan!" in what he took then as a tone of reproach. It was, in reality, self-reproach.

He went out thinking little of the matter—later on he looked at it in a different light.

It was then half-past nine; at a quarter to ten Agnes Forrester came in, and a few minutes afterwards Mrs. Herbert sent down orders for a hansom to be fetched, and the two sisters drove away, the servant telling the cabman to drive to Charing Cross.

At about half past ten Mrs. Forrester knocked somewhat imperatively at the door, and inquired for her daughter. The footman thought she had gone out with his mistress, but would inquire, and ushered the lady into the drawing-room. Before he could return, Captain Herbert opened the door, and uttered an exclamation at seeing Mrs. Forrester—he looked a little startled, too.

"You—so early!" he said, stooping to kiss her. "Is anything the matter? Nina—"

"I hope nothing," she answered. "I am puzzled about Agnes. I wanted her to call with me on an old friend who I have just heard is passing through London, and her maid told me she thought she had come here. The footman has gone to see. She never goes out like that without leaving word."

Here the footman presented himself. Mrs. Herbert and Miss Forrester had left in a hansom half-an-hour ago. His mistress had left no message.

"Did you fetch the cab?" asked his master, rather pale, but quietly.

"Yes, sir."

"Where did they go?"

"My mistress told me to say Charing Cross, sir."

"Thanks, that will do."

He stood still, pulling his moustache and thinking, with knitted brows. Mrs. Forrester removed her gloves and bonnet, and sat down. She was evidently disturbed.

"It is very odd," she said. "I can't tell you how uneasy I feel. You seem to feel the same, Alan."

"I am vexed—anxious. Nina ought not to have stirred out. She will be quite ill; and then she is always nervous unless I drive her, or am with her. Besides—"

He thought of her suppressed excitement of manner that morning; her answer to his jest, which he interpreted differently now. Her depression during the past fortnight—a something about her towards himself; that, in this moment, though not before, he recognized as strange, her refusal to go to the cricket match—it all swept over him; not to weaken his faith, but to fill him with ineffable dread of he knew not what!

Had she been conscious of some deadly malady that she had feared to tell him of, and had gone this morning to learn the truth? Was that why she would not let him take her to another physician? or had she innocently got entangled in some one else's affairs?

He knew not what to think, and the first wild thought was worse than the last. He turned half sick and faint at the mere possibility.

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Forrester, kindly,

"the child will be quite safe with Agnes."

"It isn't that; she has been so strange lately. Is there something the matter with her that we know nothing of? She has been worse. I wish she were here," he said.

"I don't know why we should both make ourselves so miserable," said Mrs. Forrester. The womanly heart that lay beneath her deep crust of worldliness was touched. "Perhaps they have only gone shopping—a surprise, maybe a bit of fun. There is nothing the matter with Nina that I know of; I was thinking rather of Agnes; and yet I am sure Nina would not be mixed up with anything of that sort."

Herbert put his hand on her shoulder; he was listening intently.

"Hush!" he said.

A step on the stair, slow, lingering, pausing outside—an interval as of hesitation—then a touch on the door. Herbert strode forward, resolutely controlling himself—a control his first glance at Nina as she came in was likely to have upset.

She was perfectly white, with her blue eyes wide and half-frightened, the look she always wore when she had been undergoing some nervous tension of fear.

He took her hand quietly, led her to a sofa, and took her hat off. She began removing her gloves with a faint smile of thanks.

"Mother," said the young man, "will you please ring the bell? I want some wine."

"I'll fetch it," said she, with alacrity, but Nina made a move of dissent.

"Don't let mamma go," she said. "I am only so tired. Why do you look so anxious, Alan? I am not ill."

"No, darling, but you will take what I give you. Here is the wine. Thanks so much mother." He was so grateful that she had kept the servants away.

No one spoke while Nina took slowly the wine he held to her lips, glancing apprehensively at the two faces—a look that went to her husband's heart; but he said cheerfully, as he saw the colour coming back to her cheeks,—

"You have frightened us, sweethearts. You are a little too precious to run any risks. Is anyone with you?"

"I came back alone. I left the hansom at the corner," she said, sitting up more erect. "When did mamma come? There was nothing to be frightened at."

"I think there was, dear," said her mother, coming forward. "You are so unused to be alone, and you were not well to day. What have you done with Agnes, my love? I wanted her to go out with me."

"Mamma," the girl began, "you will be so angry. Agnes wanted to write, but I wouldn't let her. It was better to tell you."

"Tell me what?" said Mrs. Forrester, stately and frigid at once. "What have you been doing, Nina?"

The girl seemed half paralysed by the tone of the question, but she shook off the weakness, and got up, moving away, so that neither husband nor mother were very near her.

"Agnes is married," she said, locking her hands together like a vice.

"Married!" half shrieked Mrs. Forrester, "to Frank Waverley, and you knew it, and helped her! Disobedient, headstrong children, after all my care and love."

Herbert crossed to where his wife stood, and threw one arm about her shrieking form.

"Mother," he said, almost sternly "you mustn't speak to her like that—and now. She has gone through too much already. Please leave us a little, and I'll come and tell you afterwards."

"At least let me hear now where Agnes is," said Mrs. Forrester, between tears and anger, "where she was married."

"Tell us that, Nina," said Alan.

"At St. Aloysius, in the City," she said, in a low voice, not daring to look up. "I thought if I went there would be less talk. They have gone to Folkestone."

"You see it was all nicely arranged," said Mrs. Forrester, as Herbert opened the door for her.

"Naturally," he answered, dryly. "I will come to you presently. Will you wait here or at home?"

He was conscious of a sense of exquisite relief.

"I'll go home, please," frigidly. He saw her down to the door, and then went back to the drawing-room. Nina had moved—she had thrown herself on the sofa, with her face hidden, and never stirred till she knew he was at her side, then she lifted her face.

"I was wrong, I know," said she penitently, "mamma has a right to be angry—poor mamma! Don't be angry with me too, Alan," she crept close to him like a child does who wants to ward off a harsh word. "I thought it all fun

at first, and I wanted Agnes to be happy; but I have been so miserable about it lately."

"My poor child!" said Alan, kissing her once or twice with a world of tenderness and sympathy. "I could not be angry with you—and indeed I had feared so much worse that I am too relieved to be even vexed. Besides, you have not done such very great wrong. But I am angry with Wavely and Agnes too. They have let you to bear too much of the brunt of it; you have made yourself ill with dread. I think there is not much for you to tell me. Didn't they see each other here? I remember meeting Frank once; I had forgotten it before."

"Yes, I proposed that. I thought you wouldn't mind much. But they didn't know I was so afraid. It wasn't their fault. Agnes wanted to write at once, and I said I had better tell it, because I must face it out with mamma in the end. I meant to tell you first. I didn't think she would be here too. She thinks I have deceived her—and oh, I have! I never said I couldn't agree with her."

She was very near crying, but pride and her dread of distressing him checked her. Alan was wise enough to know that she was over-wrought, and to let her lie quiet in his arms, waiting her own time to speak. He saw pretty plainly all that had perplexed him when Mrs. Manton gossiped, and Lady Mary Danvers threw out hints. There was some bitterness towards Frank, who might have thought it possible the world would misinterpret, a great deal of contempt for Mrs. Manton—greatest of all, his self-condemnation and his deep softness towards the girl-wife who clung to him with such trust in his love.

Nina lifted her head presently.

"You see," she began, looking down, "I was afraid to tell you, because you did not like Frank, and you would have wanted me to give it up. When Frank first suggested this, after mamma seemed so determined about Lord Digby, I wouldn't hear of it. Do you remember the day I wouldn't go to the match? He was coming then to tell me about it. I wouldn't have consented, only one day Mrs. Manton came. She said she hadn't seen you so often, and I never could bear her, and so I answered rather distantly; and then she laughed, and said no doubt you thought I wanted looking after—and I knew what she meant. I felt half wild when she was gone—you had been more at home lately."

(Continued on page 283.)

MISS GILMOUR'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XXV. THE PEDLAR.

In the delicious sunshine of an Italian spring morning two ladies were sitting on the verandah outside their hotel, which was built on the brow of the hill, and commanded a fine view of the lovely Lake of Lugano. To their right rose Monte Salvatore, with its wooded slopes in the first freshness of their verdure, the grey green tints of the olive contrasting delightfully with the darker foliage of the walnuts and chestnuts; away in the distance glittered twin snow peaks, almost dazzling in their brilliancy as the sun struck across them, while the lake itself, its placid surface unruled by the faintest breeze, mirrored the deep intense blue of a cloudless sky.

"Dear me, Ursula, how grave you look!" exclaimed Lady Du Vernet, briskly, withdrawing her attention from a team of oxen and their picturesque driver which was slowly making its way along the dusty road. "I thought we made a bargain that no sad thoughts were to be indulged in."

"Such bargains are more easily made than kept," returned Miss Gilmour, coming out of her reverie. She gave herself an impatient little shake. "All the same, I intend doing my best to keep to my part of it. How are you feeling now?" she added, in a gentle tone, as she re-

arranged the shawls about Lady Du Vernet's shoulders, and moved the cushions that supported her, into a more comfortable position.

"Ever so much better. Do you know, Ursula, with this Italian sky above me, and this Italian sunshine around, it almost seems to me that I am not going to die after all!"

She spoke half playfully, yet with an undercurrent of wistfulness, looking earnestly at Ursula the while.

"Of course you are not going to die—have I not been telling you so for months? You were much better when you left Algiers, and you have been improving ever since."

"Do you mean this, really, or are you only trying to cheat me?"

The eyes were more earnest, more compelling than they had been before—Lady Du Vernet hardly breathed until her question was answered.

"I am sincere in what I say," Ursula answered steadily. "Don't you remember just after Christmas I said to you that if you could only persuade yourself that you wished to live you would assuredly recover. At that time you appeared absolutely indifferent as to what the end of your illness was likely to be, now—thank Heaven!—you are indifferent no longer."

A faint flush stained the delicate whiteness of Lady Du Vernet's cheek; she half turned away as if she found something embarrassing in the young girl's last words—which had, indeed, been spoken with more than ordinary significance.

"Well, whatever the end may be, there is one thing quite certain—that you have proved yourself a very good friend to me since the day I first saw you. I should have died at Algiers if it hadn't been for your nursing, and constant care—oh, yes, I should, so you needn't shake your head any more! And I am grateful. You know that without my repeating it."

"I know also that I owed you a debt of gratitude which no effort on my part could adequately pay," Ursula said, quietly. "Remember that you took me and trusted me when I had not a friend in the world—you, who had more right than anyone else to despise me. If it hadn't been for you, Heaven only knows what would have become of me last November for I was in very desperate straits!"

The months had not passed without leaving their mark on Ursula. Her beauty was just as remarkable as ever, but the impression it made on the beholders was altogether different. The gentle softness that had characterised it under the influence of her love for Rafe had become more marked, the old defiant hauteur had entirely disappeared. Not that Ursula's spirit was dead; on the contrary, she had many a severe struggle with it still, but her control over it was greater. She had sinned and in suffering expiated her sin—the fire through which she had passed had done their work well, and she had emerged from them stronger, purer, and humbler.

Her life with Lady Du Vernet was not exactly an easy one, although it had many compensations, not the least of which was the knowledge that she was no longer sailing under false colours. Lady Du Vernet, when she was well, was kindness itself, but her illness made her petulant and irritable, and her temper at the best of times could not be described as placid. At Algiers she had a bad attack of hemorrhage from which she had made a marvellous recovery, and the doctors now held out hopes that with care she might entirely ward off the consumptive tendencies threatening her. They recommended Swiss mountain air, but the invalid had a fancy for visiting the Italian lakes before proceeding to Switzerland, so she had come to Lugano, and at present evinced no inclination to leave it.

Oddly enough, they found Captain Lequesne staying at the same hotel. His surprise when he saw Ursula with Lady Du Vernet may be imagined, and it had not lessened when she told him—as she felt herself in honour bound to do—the circumstances under which she had been offered her present post. Lady du Vernet's plucky action in engaging her filled him with admiration, which he was at no pains to conceal; and, although he had intended leaving Italy

after a stay of two or three weeks, he lingered on at the hotel day after day, seeing as much as possible of both ladies, and held by a spell whose existence he would not confess even to himself.

On this special morning he had gone down to the post-office in the quaint little town below to fetch his letters, promising to bring back an English newspaper—whose arrival was looked forward to only less eagerly by Lady Du Vernet than by her companion.

Ursula had seen some time ago in one of the society journals an announcement of Rafe Farrer's forthcoming marriage, and she was watching, with feverish anxiety, for the news of the marriage itself.

That Rafe should marry did not greatly surprise her, although she wondered, with a queer little constriction of her heart, that he should be in such haste to do so. He had soon forgotten her.

Well, it was better so. She could not expect him to remain constant to one who, in his estimation, had proved herself false, only he might surely have paid the dead love the respect of six months' mourning!

"Go for a walk, Ursula, it will do you good, and I, meanwhile, will have a little siesta," said the fair-haired widow, in a peremptory voice; and when she used that tone her companion knew there was no appeal. Lady Du Vernet had been accustomed to having her own way all her life long; opposition of any kind was quite unknown to her.

Ursula rose obediently, settled the shawls and cushions once more, and started off on her walk. Leaving the hotel on her right, she took a southerly direction, always keeping in view the lovely curves of the lake.

Although the spring had not far advanced the weather was very warm, and the young girl felt it the more insensibly as she still wore thick winter garments. Before she had proceeded far she grew tired, and was glad to sit down and rest on the ruins of what had apparently once been a shrine.

Surely there is a spell in the very name of Italy with its deep blue sky, its mountains and lakes, its vineyards and olive-trees, its poetry and passion! The spot Ursula had chosen was very quiet, save for the chirping of the cicadas in the rose-bushes and the jangle of church bells, softened by distance into tenderest melody. Now and again the cry of a driver to his patient oxen rose from the lower road, but the only person in sight was a bizarre-looking figure, with a pack on his back, who seemed to be a pedlar. As he approached nearer, Ursula saw that he was short and wiry, he had a long beard reaching midway down his chest, and a mass of tangled hair, through which his eyes looked out like a marmoset's, keen and twinkling. His dress was dilapidated, his hat a soft felt, in his ears he wore large gold rings; while his scarf was of bright orange and scarlet.

He was passing the young girl with a careless "Good-day!" when, as if arrested by something in her demeanour, he stopped short and stared at her. A moment later he had recovered himself, and was pressing his wares on her notice—needles, cotton, tapes and similar small articles of haberdashery.

More with a desire to escape from the importunities than because she was in need of them, Ursula bought a few reels of cotton, but not satisfied with this he endeavoured to enter into conversation with her—not in Italian, but in French, explaining at the same time that he was a Swiss, who had crossed the mountains because it was easier to earn a living on this side than the other. Mademoiselle was evidently English—did she like Lugano—was she going to stay in Italy long?

Ursula answered the queries as shortly as possible. She did not like the look of the man, or the way he kept his eyes fixed on her face, neither did she altogether believe his story. He spoke French fluently enough, but if she had not known his nationality she would have declared his accent to be English. In effect he puzzled her, and she was glad when he finally shouldered his pack, and went off.

Hardly had he disappeared, before she was

surprised by a voice so soft that it seemed like an echo breathing her own name.

"Ursula!"

She sprang up alarmed, and looked round. There was not a creature in sight—not even a belated goat. Once more she heard the same sound, and this time it was louder.

"Ursula, Ursula!"

"Yes," she answered, instinctively speaking in English, "Who calls me?"

A few paces in front was a mass of loose stones and masonry, half-covered by stunted bushes. From the midst of these a man slowly emerged, shaking off the dust and leaves that clung to his dark blue blouse. He was tall and emaciated, his complexion dark even for an Italian, his dress that of a peasant, but in spite of the disguise Ursula recognized him instantly.

"Father!"

"Hush!" he muttered, glancing hastily round as if to assure himself there was no chance of listeners. Seeing that the coast seemed absolutely clear, he came nearer and took off his ragged cap, thus enabling Ursula to see his face, which in spite of the dark stain upon it, looked old and worn and haggard—so changed indeed that but for the man's figure and general expression, she might have failed to recognize him as the erstwhile smart, well set up Count Lassalle.

"That man—that pedlar—what did he say to you?" he queried hoarsely, and with such evident agitation that Ursula's suspicions of the pedlar began to take definite shape.

"Nothing—at least nothing of importance. He only wanted me to buy his merchandise."

"Was that all—did he ask any questions?"

"He asked how long I had been here, and how long I intended staying, but I managed to evade giving an answer. Who is he?"

Lassalle looked at her suspiciously, but her eyes met his with fearless candour, and apparently convinced him that she had no ulterior motive in putting the question.

"He is James Hewitt, the Scotland Yard detective."

"An Englishman! Ab, I thought so. But what is he doing here?"

"Tracking me—like the tiger that he is?" burst from Lassalle's parched lips, and then he broke forth in a fearful storm of invective, calling down curses on the detective's head.

Involuntarily she drew back, and put up her hands.

"Hush, oh, hush! The pedlar is gone, and you have escaped him."

"Yes, but for how long?" he asked, bitterly. Still her words seemed to have some effect. Motioning her back to her former seat, he threw himself down on the short grass in front of her.

"This meeting of ours is opportune. I have a great deal to say to you, and it must be said before we part to-day."

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN AGITATING INTERVIEW.

AFTER his last speech Lassalle remained moodily silent. Ursula, meanwhile, waiting in trembling fear of what he might tell her.

This unexpected meeting had thoroughly unnerved her. She had felt pretty sure that by this time her father had made his escape to South America, or some place where he was not likely to be tracked, and she had made up her mind they would never meet again.

During the pause that ensued, she was recalling the last occasion on which she had seen him—that memorable night at the Moat House.

Lassalle was eyeing her keenly and half suspiciously, evidently in some doubt as to how far he might trust her. Presently he said,—

"I suppose you know the reason that forced me to leave Vienna?"

She made a sign of acquiescence, and drew back involuntarily, lowering her eyes—a movement that he was quick to notice.

"And I also suppose, you believe me guilty of the crime of which I am accused?"

A sudden hope leapt into her eyes—transformed her whole demeanour.

"Are you innocent? Oh! father, if it only might be so! I would give ten—nay twenty years of my life to believe it!"

Her eyes sparkled, her cheeks flushed while she looked at him in eager questioning. For a moment he hesitated, then he shook his head.

"What's the use of telling a lie? It could do you no good, or me either. No, I killed the poor chap right enough, but it was more or less of an accident, that is to say, it was not premeditated, or done in cold blood. But the result is the same, and if I am caught it means penal servitude for life—than which I should prefer death a hundred times!"

He turned his head and looked down at the lake from whose blue waters the shadows had lifted, then he added with a short laugh, "you'll give me credit for not being superstitious, or prone to show the white feather, and yet I have a conviction that I have come to the end of my tether at last. One thing is certain, I won't be taken alive if I can help it."

He touched his breast significantly, and Ursula understood that he had weapon concealed there.

She was silent—what, indeed, could she say? In spite of the horror of his crime, it was impossible for her to ignore the fact of his being her father; in his present desperate straits, she could hardly walk away and leave him to his fate.

Quite suddenly his mood changed—as it had a trick of doing. The despondency passed from his face, and was succeeded by a more resolute expression that accorded better with his real character.

"Look here, Ursula, I must get away from Lugano, and you must help me. How much money can you find for me?"

For answer, she drew forth her purse, and handed it to him. Shaking out its contents, he carefully counted them.

"A little less than five pounds!" he exclaimed disappointedly. "That is not the slightest use. You surely have more at home!"

"No, that represents all I possess in the world. My salary is fifty pounds a year; I have received one quarter of it, the second is not yet due. Out of the twelve pounds ten, I had to buy various articles of dress, so you will see there was not much margin. I shall have the second quarter in the course of a week or so, and then I will give it to you."

"That will be too late—I can't afford to wait so long. Hewitt has tracked me here, and in the end is pretty certain to spot me, in spite of my disguise. My only hope is to get away at once, and that I can't do for lack of money."

"What have you done with the bank notes you took from the Moat House?" she inquired abruptly and without looking at him.

He started violently, and flushed a deep red.

"The Moat House!" he stammered, "what do you know about that business?"

"I know that you broke open Mr. Verinder's bureau and abstracted a roll of notes from it, because I was there at the time and saw you do it."

This announcement seemed to disturb him strangely; it was some minutes before he recovered his self-possession.

"Fate is against me, I think. I never used to believe in it, but later events have staggered me," he muttered, more to himself than her, then he shrugged his shoulders. "Those notes you allude to enabled me to get to London, which, without them, I should not have been able to do."

"Once there, I found there was no chance of crossing to the other side of the Atlantic, inasmuch as every outward-bound steamer was closely watched, and if I had taken a ticket and gone on board, it was a dead certainty the police would have nabbed me."

"Knowing this, I remained in London for some months, waiting until their vigilance had relaxed, and meanwhile my money, however much, melted away. Then I saw a good chance of getting here, where I have certain political friends, who I thought would help me. On my arrival, I found my mistake—these friends have the will but not the power to give me assistance, as a matter of fact they are at the present moment as hard up as myself, and under police supervision into the bargain. However, I thought

myself safe in my disguise until the day before yesterday, when I met Hewitt, in the character of a pedlar. Then I knew it was pretty well all up with me unless I could get money to leave the place with. That man is a very sleuth hound and he won't rest satisfied until he has tracked me down!"

"In whose interests is he acting—that of the Austrian Government?" asked Ursula, suddenly.

"No. At first, I fancy, he was aiding the Vienna police, but now he is employed by a private individual, who has promised him a large reward on my apprehension. That is what makes him so eager. The man employing him is Mr. Rafe Ferrers, of Westwood-park."

Ursula was partly prepared to hear this, and yet, in spite of herself, a little half-strangled cry burst from her lips.

"You know this man, Ferrers?" Lassalle asked.

"Yes, I know him."

"And you evidently take a great interest in him, since the mention of his name affects you so profoundly. Ah, I have it! You must have been staying in W—shire, to know about that escapade of mine at the Moat House; perhaps you were at Westwood itself, and Ferrers was your lover!"

For a moment she did not answer, then she said, steadily,—

"You are right in both your surmises. I was staying at Westwood, and I was engaged to marry its master."

"Then why, in the name of Heaven did you not carry out your design?"

"Could I marry the man whose brother my father had killed? You seem to forget that Rafe Ferrers and Denis Marchant were sons of the same mother."

He winced at this, and busied himself in gathering up the money she had handed him and putting it in his pocket. His brows, meanwhile, were bent together in deep thought.

"I suppose this Rafe Ferrers was very fond of you; you are handsome, you know, and I have already seen many men go down before your charms."

There was the old sneer in his voice that she remembered so well, and that had so often maddened her in former days.

"Don't you think, if you used your influence, he might be induced to leave me alone for your sake? It seems to me worth trying anyhow."

Ursula bit her lip hard.

"My influence on Mr. Ferrers is nil. I left his house suddenly and without explanation, and it would be impossible for me to approach him now. Besides, he is married."

"You are wrong. He is not married. So much I heard from Hewitt himself—not directly, of course, but through a friend of mine, here at Lugano, who found it out from Hewitt's letters—which the detective is foolish enough to keep locked up in his lodgings! Added to that, he yesterday wired to Lucerne, where Mr. Ferrers is now staying, asking him to come on here without delay, as my arrest was only a matter of hours—more or less. He little thought, when he sent that telegram that a duplicate of it would be in my hands half-an-hour later! However, the fact remains that Ferrers will probably be here sometime this afternoon, and you must lose no time in seeing him. It is my only chance, and I dare not let it slip."

It was well for Ursula that her father was too much engrossed in his own concerns to pay attention to her. Rafe unmarried, and coming here!

For a few seconds she lost sight of the gulf dividing them, and could think only of the bare fact that she might see him—speak to him even once more.

A sort of delirium seized her—she felt sick, giddy, light-headed; but a movement on Lassalle's part recalled her to herself. Some people, who looked like English tourists, were approaching, and he was instantly on his guard.

"I must go; it will not do for us to be seen together, for fear either should be recognised," he whispered, hastily. "When can I meet you

again? It must be sometime this evening after dusk."

After a moment's consideration she promised to be in the woods beyond her hotel, at about nine o'clock, and she had hardly finished speaking before Lassalle disappeared amongst the bushes.

She rose slowly, and walked back to the hotel, trying as she went to drive from her face any tall-tale evidence of the agitating interview through which she had just passed. She found Lady Du Vernet still on the verandah, looking exceedingly fragile, though wonderfully pretty in her white wool wraps. By her side sat Captain Lequesne, with a newspaper in his hand, from which he had apparently been reading aloud.

"News for you, Miss Gilmour," he said, rising, and offering Ursula his seat. "What do you think of Minna Ferrers for the heroine of an exciting romance—little demure Minna, who looked as if the proverbial butter wouldn't melt in her mouth! She actually had the temerity to jilt her august cousin, and slope with someone else on the very eve of her wedding-day. Coming it pretty strong, wasn't it? My opinion of little Minna has gone up fifty per cent—I really did not think her capable of such a spirited proceeding, and I'm almost sorry now I didn't propose to her myself."

"It was a pity," murmured Lady Du Vernet, filling in the pause, and thus enabling Ursula to escape without replying. "If you had done so you would have been the one left in the lurch instead of poor Rafe Ferrers, and the experience might have had a steady effect on you, and done you worlds of good. Yes, on the whole, I am sorry you did not propose to her."

They both laughed. They had known each other a good many years now, these two, and in her early girlhood it had seemed likely enough that she would marry Lequesne instead of Sir Robert Du Vernet. But Fate willed it otherwise; the officer had clung to his freedom, and gone off to India without "coming to the point." Some time later he heard of his old sweetheart's marriage, and though it may have given him a momentarily twinge, its effect was not lasting—perhaps, indeed, he occasionally congratulated himself on having steered clear of the pitfalls of matrimony. But since meeting the pretty widow and her prettier companion, at Lugano, his feelings had undergone a change—as was evinced by his stopping at the hotel, contrary to his original resolution. The charm of feminine society grew upon him more and more, and matrimony did not after all seem so undesirable. The difficulty was to determine which of the two women he liked best. Ursula was certainly the more beautiful, and more interesting. She would make a wife of whom any man might well be proud. But there were her father, and his antecedents to think of—and when he did think of them Lequesne grew grave, and let his thoughts wander off to Lady Du Vernet, against whom no such disadvantage could be urged. She was delicate certainly, but her illness had lately taken a turn for the better, and every day brought her a renewal of strength.

Lequesne found himself on the horns of a dilemma. He was in love, but with which lady he could not decide!

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN AGITATING INTERVIEW.

A SUDEN break had come in the quiet and uneventful life which Ursula had been leading lately. The sight of her father had been disturbing enough, but the effect of seeing him was heightened by the news he had given her, part of which had been confirmed by Lequesne on her return to the hotel.

She remained locked in her own room, thinking over the situation all the afternoon. So far as regarded Lassalle it was serious enough, and she was racked with indecision between her abhorrence of his crime, and the tie of blood between them which would not allow her to desert him in her extremity. If she could do anything by which his escape could be facilitated duty compelled her to do it.

Punctually at the time appointed, she went to the rendezvous mentioned by her father, where she waited patiently for an hour without seeing him. By this time it was getting late. Lady Du Vernet would be wondering where she was. Why had not Lassalle appeared—was it possible his morning apprehensions were justified, and Hewitt had succeeded in arresting him?

Poor Ursula turned sick and faint at the thought, and sat down on the fallen trunk of a tree, pulling out her watch, and placing it on her lap, so as to mark each moment as it went. The silence and dusk of the wood grew intolerable to her, and at last unable to bear it any longer, she got up and went into the road which gave access to the plantation, where she stood, partly concealed by a bush, but in such a position as to command a view of anyone who approached.

Ah! there was the figure of a man walking very cautiously along, and gazing about him as he came! It must be Lassalle—and under this impression she advanced half-way from her place of concealment—only however, to draw back again with blanched lips.

Instead of her father, she saw the pedlar from whom she had bought the reels of cotton in the morning!

Luckily the darkness hid her, and he passed on without noticing her, but from his manner it was clear he was keeping a keen look out; and his presence at once explained why Lassalle had not kept his appointment.

It was no use waiting any longer, and as soon as the pedlar was well on in front, she slipped from behind the bush and hastened back to the hotel.

Lady Du Vernet had already retired, leaving word that she was sleepy, and did not wish to be disturbed, for which Ursula was supremely thankful.

As she paced backwards and forwards in the darkness of her room there came a handful of small gravel against her window, evidently thrown by someone below. She opened the casement, and had hardly done so before a stone, wrapped round with white paper, fell at her feet. Who had thrown it she did not know, for when she looked out there was no one visible, but the paper proved to be a note from her father, written in English and with a pencil. It ran thus,—

"I could not keep my appointment with you. H— was on the *qui vive*, and I was afraid. He has several spies about, and they keep so good a watch that I see no chance of leaving Lugano. Money would have been my salvation a few days ago, but now all the exits from the place are so well guarded, the station and steamers so thoroughly watched, that escape seems impossible unless H— can be induced to withdraw. The only resource left is an appeal to Ferrers, and you must make it. The man was in love with you once, and doubtless is so still; for your sake he may consent to let the prosecution drop. Anyhow you must see him to-morrow and let me know the result. He arrived from Lucerne this evening, and is staying at the *Hôtel du Parc*. Get speech with him as early as possible in the morning, and at dusk I will be under your window, or will send someone whom I can trust to bring me your answer. Remember, the case is urgent; on your success depends the life of your father."

Naturally enough the contents of this note did not in any way tend to calm Ursula. The idea of an appeal to Rafe was repugnant to her in the last degree; it not only meant humiliating her pride into the very dust, but very probably humiliating it for nothing. She knew Rafe's character so well, or thought she did—knew the strength of it, and the unwavering rectitude that subordinated everything to the one idea of honour. How could she dare ask him to forego the justice which he no doubt felt he owed to his dead brother's memory!

Fully half the night she sat up considering this problem, whose difficulties seemed to increase with the hours; and, when at length she got into bed, it was only to toss restlessly about between brief intervals of slumber.

In the morning Lady Du Vernet asked what ailed her, and she had to falter some excuse of "not feeling well," a perfectly true one, for she

was almost exhausted by the stress of her emotions.

"The best thing for you to do is to get back to bed again," observed her ladyship. "I should not think of letting you read to me, or write letters this morning. If you are not better by this afternoon, we must call in the doctor. For my own part, I think I shall go out for a drive with Antoinette."

Antoinette was her maid.

Ursula waited until after her departure, then put on her hat and mantle and left the hotel. She had no definite plan of action; indeed her thoughts were in such a chaos that she could not formulate one, but her steps took the direction of the spot where she had yesterday met her father. What was he doing now she wondered; where had he taken refuge?

It was clear that Hewitt had drawn the net so tightly round him as to render escape well-nigh impossible.

Ursula felt she must do something. The very fact that she had ceased to feel any affection for her father made her the more eager to leave no stone unturned in her efforts to assist him.

She sat down in the self same spot as yesterday, first of all, making sure that the bushes and masonry from which Lassalle had emerged no one this morning; then she leaned her elbows on her knees, and her face in her hands, and gave herself up to thought.

Footsteps came towards her, but she did not notice them until they paused in front of her, then she raised her head, and behold no less a person than Rafe Ferrers himself!

She knew he was in Lugano; she had, indeed, come out with the bad expectation of seeing him, and yet when he really stood before her in the flesh, she was as completely unversed as if he had suddenly stepped from another world.

Rafe himself was pale, but he was the first to recover.

"This is an unlooked-for meeting, Miss Gilmour—another exemplification of the adage which tells us the unexpected always happens."

His tone was cold and hard, his manner sarcastic. Ursula could find neither words nor voice for reply, and after waiting a minute, as if to give her time to speak, he bowed once more and turned away.

If there had been only herself to consider, Ursula might have let him go; but the thought of her father gave her the courage of desperation. She took a step forward.

"Mr. Ferrers!"

He stopped immediately.

"Well?"

"I have something to say to you—something of importance, can you spare the time to listen?"

He looked at her attentively; she was still pale, and there was an expression of humble pleading on her face that was quite new to it, and went far towards altering its character.

Rafe thought he had steeled his heart against her—more, that he hated her for her treachery in the past, and yet the mere tones of her voice were sufficient to thrill him to the innermost core of his being—the mere sight of her brought a fierce pain that was, in itself, half delight.

No other woman ever had such power over him, no other ever would have. He feared so much to betray himself that his voice was harder and colder than ever when he replied,—

"I can spare the time; but may I suggest this is hardly the place to discuss matters of importance. We are liable at any moment to be interrupted."

"I must risk that," she answered, feverishly, "there is no time to be lost."

And yet, after making this assertion, she stood for a few minutes quite still, her eyes downcast, her hands clasped together. It was so difficult to put her prayer into words.

"Did you wonder," she said at length, with a supreme effort, "what made me leave Westwood so abruptly last autumn?"

Instantly his manner changed. He drew himself up, and there was a cold glitter of contempt in his eyes.

"We will not discuss that, if you please, Miss Gilmour. The past is over and done with."



THE PEDLAR WAS PASSING URSULA WITH A CARELESS "GOOD DAY!" WHEN HE SUDDENLY STOPPED SHORT AND STARED AT HER.

It is your intention to attempt to resuscitate it I may as well tell you at once that I have neither the time nor the inclination to listen."

Ursula drew a quick breath. Ah, how terrible it was to hear him speak thus and to know that her conduct had, seemingly, given him every justification for doing so! And then it suddenly flashed upon her that in urging her appeal for money she would also be explaining the motive of her flight, and letting him see that she had been sinned against more than sinning!

It was strange that this aspect of the question had not struck her before—it made all the difference in the world to her position.

"You must—you shall hear me!" she cried, and there was almost a ring of exultation in her tones. "It is not for my own sake that I allude to the past, and not for my own sake that I would plead to you, but past and present are so inextricably mixed, that in order to explain the one, I must refer to the other. The reason then that I left Westwood was because I heard of your brother's death—poor Denis Merchant."

"What had that to do with you? You did not know him."

"On the contrary, I knew him fairly well; but that was not why I was so horrified at the view of his fate. Unhappily, I had a deeper, and more personal connection with it than mere friendship. The man who killed him was my father."

"Good Heavens, you do not mean it!" exclaimed Rafe, in horror.

"It is true. Now you see why Westwood was no place for me, and why, after I learned the news, I dared not meet your face again."

She spoke quietly and composedly enough. The sight of his intense agitation seemed to have a calming effect on her. Besides, her mind had by this time, become so accustomed to the truth, that it no longer affected her as it had done at first. Her horror had not lessened, but it had so to speak, grown familiar.

On Rafe, however, the intelligence fell with crushing force, as a totally unexpected blow;

but it did not take him long to realize it, neither did he for an instant doubt its truth.

"Who told you this?" he demanded, abruptly.

"Captain Lequesne."

"Ah!" Rafe's brow darkened at the name.

"Then he was an old friend of yours?"

"Hardly that, still I knew him slightly before I went to Westwood. Wait—I will tell you the circumstances under which I first met him, and then you will understand better."

In few words, and with the utmost simplicity, she gave him the outlines of the story she had told Lady Du Vernet, in the Brunswick-square lodging-house. It was astonishing how easy she found it to do this now—and yet, when in the first days of her betrothal to Rafe, she had tried to make the confession—she had never been able to achieve it! Perhaps the reason lay partly in the fact that destiny had now decreed their final separation, and partly because she had entirely subordinated self and selfish desires to the supreme efforts she was on the point of making for her father's life.

"You at last see me as I am," she said, when she had concluded, and shame flushed her cheeks. "You see me as the adventures who trusted to a forged letter for getting a situation, the woman who lived and still lives, under a name not her own. I did wrong when I came to Westwood, I did worse wrong when I listened to words of love from a man whose honour was stainless, and the worst wrong of all when I permitted myself to become engaged to him. But I did right when I left him!"

Rafe listened in silence, feeling almost as if he were assisting at some terrible but impersonal tragedy. And yet, time and scene and place were the last that should have been chosen for a tragedy—rather indeed were they all suggestive of youth and love, and beauty. The brilliant sunshine fell on mountain and stream, and snow-capped peak, little wavelike rippled the bosom of the lake, as baby breezes wandered over it, the scent of flowers and songs of birds mingled on the warm

air—all palpitating with the rich colour and radiance of the Italian noon-tide.

He was deeply moved by her story—as indeed, he could hardly fail to be seeing that he had loved her so well. Still it must be confessed that he felt repelled. The incident of the forged letter was almost as dreadful as the thought of poor Denis's death, inasmuch as it concerned Ursula herself even more nearly. She had stooped to this dishonourable action, she had come to the house and accepted his love under false pretences—she whom he had once looked upon as a very queen among women!

His face was set and stern when he turned to speak to her.

"You are right. Leaving Westwood was the only alternative remaining to you, but even that did not right the wrong of your coming."

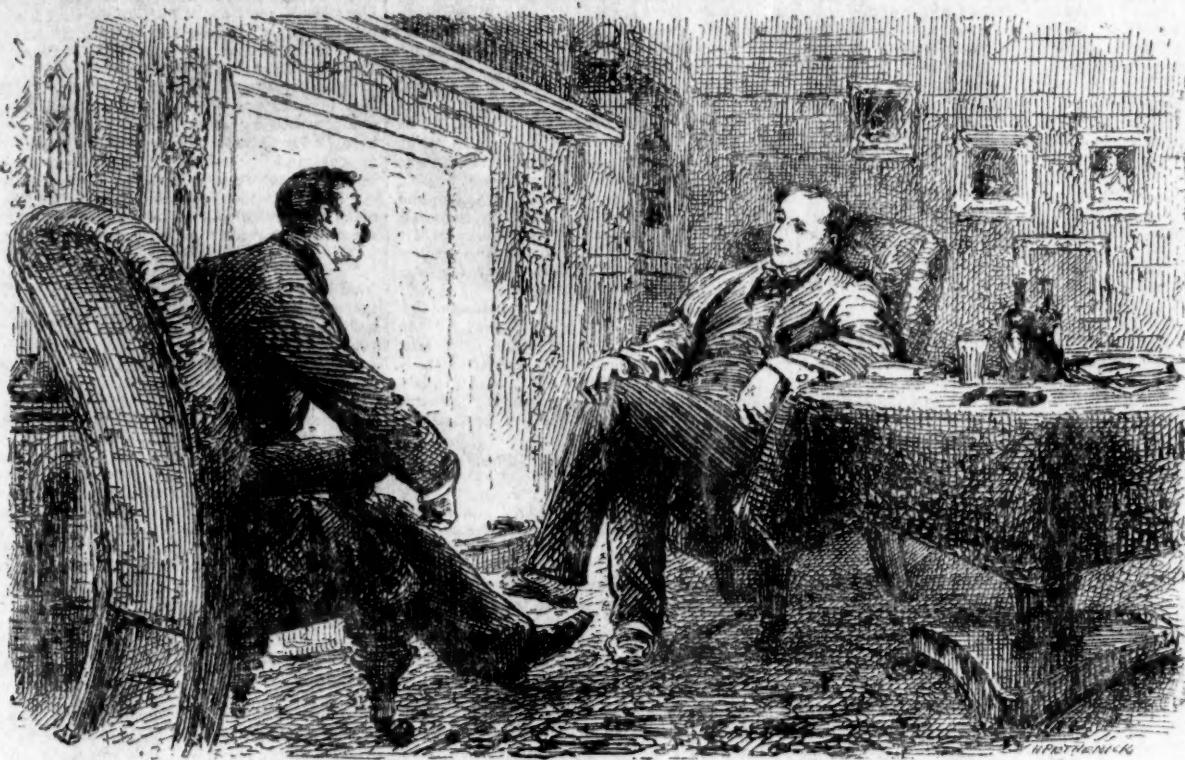
She winced almost as if he had struck her. A passionate retort rose to her lips, but she drove it back. After all he only meted out justice to her—his verdict was no harsher than she deserved, and yet, surely in the despairing misery of the five minutes that followed his condemnation, poor Ursula fully expiated her sin!

"Still, the past is over and done with," he added in a different tone, "and the best thing we can do is to bury it. Have you anything else to say to me?"

She had much, but how could she find courage to say it—how appeal for a living mercy to a dead love?

(To be continued.)

LABOUR tracts of sand wastes are now being reclaimed along the Welsh coast. Series of parallel fences are put up seaward, closely interwoven with wires and furze, and spaces between these posts are filled with earth and road-scrapings. In these, various trees, such as sycamore, willow, pine, and alder are planted, while the ridges are sown with gorse and broom seed and planted with briar.



"WELL, OLD CHAPPIN," FRANK BEGAN, BEATING HIMSELF IN THE ARMCHAIR, "HOW GOES IT?"

THE ASPENDALE PROPERTY.

CHAPTER V.

CIRCUMSTANCES changed Charles Tempest's plans. He left India sooner than he expected, and landed in England about the middle of May. He had been abroad three years, and it was borne in on him sadly as he travelled to London that there were very few people he felt anxious to see again, or who would be particularly glad of his return.

Mr. Tempest (he had renounced the "Captain" along with his military career) was a man of thirty, rather old for his age, and with a gravity many people mistook for sternness—a staunch friend, an honourable foe, an honest, upright English gentleman, but there was just a strain of melancholy in his character, which chance acquaintances ascribed to pride.

Really it was due to his early training. His grandparents adored him, but they were elderly people at his birth, and as he grew up had little sympathy with his youth. His father, on his return to England, avoided Charles—perhaps because the boy reminded him of the fair young wife he had loved, as it had never been in his power to love his second choice. Also Fate had made Charles far richer than his family, so that their positions were most uncomfortably reversed, and it was the younger man who was in a position to make presents and confer kindnesses.

At twenty-five the lonely soldier fell in love with a penniless girl, whom he believed returned his affection. Alice Grey always made some excuse for delaying the marriage, and at last she confessed to her fiancé she was passionately attached to another, and had been forced by her parents to accept Charles Tempest for his money.

Mr. and Mrs. Grey had rather a bad time of it in their interview with the injured suitor. He blamed them, not Alice, and he took her part so

thoroughly that he induced the ambitious couple to give way, and allow her to marry the love of her choice—a struggling literary man.

Alice and Mr. Dalton regarded Charles as a benefactor, and called their first child after him. But the incident only added to the gravity of the young soldier's character. Perhaps he was afraid of history repeating itself, for he shunned all ladies' society, and became known as the most determined woman-hater in his regiment.

And now he had come home. By one stroke of an old lady's pen his whole future had been changed. The mess-room and the barracks would know him no more. He must settle down as a country gentleman. His income was—counting the interest on Mrs. Aspendale's savings—twenty-four thousand a year, and he had an estate worthy of a duke. Charles had heard of Aspendale often, he knew how dearly his father had loved the place, and he felt one thrill of honest regret the colonel had not lived to see this day.

"The governor thought no place in the world equal to the home of his boyhood, and I should be as happy in chambers in the Temple as in the finest mansion built."

The thought of the Temple reminded him of an old schoolfellow who lived there. Frank Dangerfield and Charles Tempest had been staunch friends all their life, and though they were parted when Charles went to Sandhurst, they had really managed to see a good deal of each other, and had corresponded at intervals during Tempest's absence in India.

Dangerfield, was perhaps, the only person who thoroughly understood his old chum, and who realized how much the episode of Alice Grey had cost him.

"I'll go and look up old Frank," was Charles Tempest's decision; "he, at least, will have a welcome for me."

Mr. Tempest left his luggage at an hotel in the near neighbourhood of the Strand, and strolled into the classic precincts of the Temple, where Dangerfield not only rented an office for the recep-

tion of briefs (which never came), but lived, moved, and had his being. Three rooms and a kind of box-like slip, just large enough to hold a desk, a high stool, and a boy-clerk comprised his suite of chambers, and the last strongly objected to Mr. Tempest's entrance, assuring him that Mr. Dangerfield was most particularly engaged.

"Take my card and ask when I can see him," replied the intruder. The boy vanished, and Dangerfield speedily appeared, wrung his old friend's hand, eyes, smile and voice testifying to the heartiness of his welcome.

"But you are busy," demurred Tempest.

"I'll call again."

Frank laughed.

"I am idleness personified; that young imp," pointing to the boy, "makes all the difficulties he can in the way of strangers seeing me, with a view of impressing them with my importance; and the vast number of clients who request my services."

While he had been speaking he led the way through a good-sized official-looking apartment to a smaller room cosily furnished, in oak, which the presence of a number of pipes and yellow back novels, a strong smell of tobacco ashes, pictures on the walls, and bottled beer on the table, proclaimed the private den of the rising barrister.

"Well, old chappie," he began, when he had pushed a big grandfather's chair forward for his friend, "how goes it? you don't look half as yellow as I expected; I thought India turned people a pleasing shade of coppercolour."

"Not all parts of it, and besides, Frank, I have only been gone three years."

"That's true, it seems much longer. I had my first brief last week, Charley, and it was indorsed forty shillings. Don't you think after such marvellous luck, I am sure to be Lord Chancellor, at the very least?"

"I think you look as jolly as a sandboy," retorted Tempest, "and that I'd give all I have in the world for your spirits."

"Well, what's the good of fretting!" retorted Frank. "I have four hundred a-year of my own, so I shall not be obliged to seek a refuge in the big house, where people wear a uniform, and cigars are unknown. And let me tell you, Charley, if a fellow's known to be a pauper, very little is expected of him and he really can have a jolly time and yet spend very little. I write something for magazines; I don't pick up many guineas but it's better than nothing; in fact, I'm very cheerful, considering, and now you've left the service, we'll have some jolly times."

"Have you seen my stepmother lately?" demanded Tempest, who had introduced his chum to the small villa at Waldon before he left England.

"Not very; she asked me to spend Whitsuntide at the Priory."

"And you didn't go?"

"Well, I had a kind of fancy I should like you to show me the old place, and 'ere the barrister blushed like a girl—" "I'd other fish to fry."

"Meaning you are engaged to be married?"

"No, I'm not!" Dangerfield replied, energetically, "and what's more I don't suppose I ever shall be. But there's a young lady—" he broke off in embarrassment, and Tempest laughed heartily.

"There are a great many young ladies, Frank," he said, cheerfully, "unless the world has altered very much. 'Do you mean that you have lost your heart to one of them?"

"Not exactly—she's an awfully jolly girl, and I want to get introduced to her. Don't let's talk about her, Tempest, you'd only ridicule my feelings, and—I tell you she's perfect, just like a princess."

"I'm not sure that princesses are all perfect," said Charles, with a smile. "What's her name?"

"I don't know."

Tempest stared.

"I say, Dangerfield, are you a candidate for a lunatic asylum?"

"I said you'd laugh."

"I am perfectly serious; but to be in love with a girl and not know her name—"

"It's quite natural. I met her in the street, and she asked me the way—don't smile, Charles, there was no one else for her to ask—and I walked about a mile with her. Somehow after that I couldn't get her out of my head. I saw her in church, and two or three times on the pier, but no one I asked about her seemed to know her name or where she lived. I thought at Whitsuntide a small seaside place would be full, and I must meet with some one who knew her, but I didn't."

"Poor old boy. Your courtship seems to labour under difficulties."

Dangerfield changed the subject.

"I suppose you are going down to Westeshire?"

"Presently; there's no hurry."

"Well, you always were a cool hand. If I came into an estate unexpectedly I should be wild to see it."

"I feel miserable when I think of the Priory," said Tempest. "I am a bit of a fatalist, you know, Dangerfield, and when I remember the history of the place during the last sixty years, I feel inclined to fight shy of it. It's on record that everyone who has had anything to do with the Priory in that time has been miserable."

"Is it haunted?"

"Not that I know of. My great grandfather broke his wife's heart, and dispossessed his younger daughter (my grandmother) because she married against his wishes. Her twin sister had an awful fate; she married the worst man in the county, who ill-treated her and ran off with another woman in less than two years; then she set her whole affections on her son, and he was accidentally drowned before he was of age. My father was in the boat, too, and Mrs. Aspendale could never forgive him for escaping instead of Gerald. Then for twenty years the poor old woman lived alone, always trying some fresh hobby. Finally she took a niece and her two girls to live at the Priory, and from what I gather, as her health declined, they got such a domination over her that she was virtually a prisoner in her own house and shamefully neglected besides. She had just spirit left to resolve her gaolers

should not profit by their villainy, and so surreptitiously she got a lawyer to the house and made a will in my favour. A pretty shock it must have been to the Hursts when they heard it read."

Dangerfield looked bewildered.

"That's a very different story to the one I heard, but I suppose you are sure of the facts?"

"I think so—who mentioned the Hursts to you?"

"There was a man at college with me who lives close to Aspendale Priory; we weren't exactly friends, but we were fairly intimate, and to my surprise he turned up about a month ago, and wanted me to undertake some business for him. I had to tell him a barrister wasn't a detective and declined, but I felt sorry for him, he seemed so desperately cut up."

"And was the business about the Hursts?"

"Yes; it seems Bailey (he's a baronet and no end of a swell) was in love with the elder Miss Hurst, whom he described as a model of goodness and accomplishments. Old Mrs. Aspendale favoured the match, and he veritably believes disinherited her great niece, solely because she refused to be Lady B.—"

"Oh, that's nonsense!" said Tempest, cheerfully, "there was the other sister, or the mother, if your would-be client's theory is correct, why didn't they come in for everything. No; depend upon it, Frank, those three women were nothing better than harpies, they wanted the poor old lady's money, and so they cut her off from all her own friends, and let her see no one but themselves. Sir Roger Bailey ought to congratulate himself on his escape."

"He doesn't," returned Dangerfield, grimly; "but he looks the most common-place unromantic sort of fellow; he's desperately hard hit."

"What did he want you to do?"

"Find his lady love! He's a simple fellow, and seemed to think barristers and detectives (whose duties, by the way, he mixes hopelessly) can do anything. It seems that the Hursts left Aspendale suddenly in the month of March, and from that day forward nothing whatever has been heard of them; they had many friends in the neighbourhood—Bailey described them as the most popular people in the place—and some of these had offered them a home till their plans were settled, but no one had received so much as a line from them.

"They did not say good-bye to a living creature, and a lady who was calling at the Priory, only the day before they left it, asserts that Mrs. Hurst told her they had made no plans, and expected to be at Aspendale quite another month."

"Well," said Charles Tempest, gravely, "I am thankful they have not settled in the neighbourhood. I own I was a little afraid they might take a small house near the Priory, and—"

"Make a dead set at you," concluded Dangerfield, "thinking if they couldn't have Aspendale for themselves one of the girls might as well be queen consort, eh?"

"Well, I confess I have the strongest possible prejudice against them," said Mr. Tempest, "and their sudden flight proves it is not ill-founded. People don't vanish like a shadow unless there is something wrong about them."

Frank smiled.

"Bailey seemed very crestfallen when I told him I saw no way of helping him. I said that, even if he went to a detective, and the latter discovered the Hursts, I did not see what it would avail him. He had already offered his hand and heart, and while those were refused, it was impossible the family could take any other help from him."

The two friends dined together at Dangerfield's club, a very select one, for the impudent barrister was in the best society in London. Then, as they sat smoking, Frank suddenly inquired,—

"What are you going to do next? Shall you stay in London, or make straight for Aspendale?"

"Oh, I shall stay a bit, I am in no hurry; and there ought to be a lot going on in London in May, if it's anything of a season."

"There's plenty going on, and you'll be one of the pet eligibles of Belgravia, if you care about that sort of thing."

Under his friend's auspices Charles Tempest went out a good deal; but, in less than a week, he had had quite enough of being lionized as the best catch of the season, and told Frank he should go down to the Priory.

"Can't you come with me, old fellow? You own yourself you are not burdened with briefs, and your literary pursuits can't chain you to the Temple indefinitely. Come down with me tomorrow, and I promise to let you return to your beloved chambers on Monday."

"Done!" said Dangerfield, cheerfully; "only make my excuses to Mrs. Tempest, if she thinks me rude for refusing her invitation for Whitsuntide."

"I'll tell her you were in pursuit of the particular fair one you covet for your own property. My step-mother approves of early marriages, so she'll take an interest in your romance."

"I'd rather you didn't mention it," said Dangerfield. "I always tell Mrs. Tempest a briefless barrister can't afford to think of matrimony."

A light broke on Tempest. He knew, none better, that his step-mother had no particular refinement of feeling, and that she was desperately anxious her girls should marry young. Three of them were grown up now; and Dangerfield, despite his brieflessness, would be, according to their mother's views, a desirable son-in-law. Charles quite understood now why Frank had not gone down to the Priory at Whitsuntide. He would not visit Mrs. Tempest while her stepson was away lest he should give a colour to her hopes.

They reached Weston station at six o'clock. A carriage, with the Aspendale livery, was in waiting, and they drove rapidly to the Priory. The beautiful horses, the luxurious equipage, the powdered footmen brought home to Tempest his wealth more really than anything had done before.

The servants were drawn up in the hall to receive their new master. Mrs. Tempest, with her eldest girls (the younger ones were at school), stood smiling in the background. It was a pleasant scene, but it depressed Charles. To his mind there was no heart in it. What could the servants care about a man they had never seen? and, as for his step-mother, he knew perfectly that, so long as his purse was open to her, she could have dispensed with his presence.

The butler, on behalf of the servants, said a few words of welcome, mentioning that he had been at the Priory when Mr. Tempest's father had made it his home; and that one or two of the elder servants well remembered Mr. Claude.

"There's others have come and gone since that, sir," the old man concluded; "and we have nothing to say against them. But a house like Aspendale Priory needs a master; and it's more than thirty years since a gentleman had a voice in managing the property. We're main glad to see you, Mr. Tempest, and we hope you've come to live among us."

"I hope so, too, my friends," said Charles, heartily. "It won't be my fault if Aspendale Priory does not hold up its head once more in the county as the home of true old English hospitality!"

Dinner passed off well. Bertha Tempest sat next Frank, and was, perhaps, a trifle too amiable to the young barrister; but a man will forgive a great deal to a pretty girl, and so Frank did not find her attentions irksome, and thoroughly enjoyed himself.

By common consent nothing serious was discussed. It was just a party of pleasant people met to talk over indifferent subjects; but when the ladies had retired, Charles Tempest said suddenly,—

"I'm afraid there's a bad half-hour in store for me, Frank. Mrs. Tempest wants to see me to-night on private business. I wonder what it is? Haven't the servants been attentive enough; or does she propose to give a ball to introduce the girls to the county?"

Frank looked at his friend keenly.

"Before you have that *tit-a-tat*, Charley, you had better make up your mind."

"What in the world do you mean?"

Mr. Dangerfield went on,—

"Thus far, I take it, Mrs. Tempest is on a visit to you. Now you have returned, things must be put on a different footing. She probably expects you to ask her to remain with you as housekeeper and lady-hostess. Well, you mustn't do it if you ever mean to marry."

"Why?"

"Because you would be disappointing Mrs. Tempest cruelly, and placing your future wife in the position of an intruder."

Charles Tempest sighed.

"I don't believe I shall ever marry, but I have no intention of asking my step-mother to make her home here. She has had a hard struggle, poor thing! I shall make her an allowance, but we are not congenial enough to live together."

Mrs. Tempest awaited him in the drawing-room after the girls had retired, and Dangerfield had—failing to discover a smoking-room—gone to enjoy a weed in his own apartment. She looked a little troubled, and Charles felt a strange pity for her. After all she had had a very hard fight, and she could not help it that she was not a lady born.

"Now, what is it?" he asked, kindly. "Be quite sure I will do my best. This fortune would give me no pleasure if I had to think of the children in poverty."

"I think you are the best man I ever knew," said Mrs. Tempest wiping her eyes, "and I do hope you won't think me unkind; but, my dear boy, I can't stay here. I will come and see you from time to time—but to live at the Priory would kill me."

It was the last thing in the world he had expected her to say, and he felt a great relief that he should not have to tell her he wanted his home to himself.

"What's the matter with the poor old house?" he asked. "Is it haunted?"

"Haunted!" said Mrs. Tempest, laughing almost hysterically. "Yes; by the memory of the Hursts. Charles, I have heard of those women till I am weary of their very name. The servants quote them on all occasions. The few people who have called talk of no one else, and the clergyman of the parish—who ought to know better—asked me if I was not afraid of a curse falling on us because we had robbed the widow and fatherless. Of course I told him it was you—not us."

"You admitted I was a robber, that was hardly kind," said Tempest, "but I think I understand. Still, you know as a fact no one did any robbing. If Mrs. Aspendale had died intestate we were her next-of-kin. The Hursts feathered their nest well for her lifetime no doubt."

"It's been something awful," said Mrs. Tempest. "Mr. Carley—the Weston lawyer—told me I was a persecutor, and Lady Bailey called me a usurper. I'm sure, Charles, I never could have stood it, only I felt you were coming home and would put things right."

"I'll do my best. Now, as to money matters. If I pay the rent of a house in London, and allow you a thousand a-year, do you think you can manage? Of course you must come to me for help when the girls want trousseaux and that sort of thing."

"I think Mr. Dangerfield cares for Bertha," observed Mrs. Tempest a little later, "and as you are so kind as to offer to help us, I should like to take a house at Netherton-on-Sea for the season. He is always backwards and forwards at his uncle's, so they would meet often and I am quite sure then something would come of it."

"You shall have the house at Netherton," said Charles, "but don't go matchmaking for Bertha or the others, only harm comes of it."

Mr. Tempest liked his half-sisters, and Bertha had always been his favourite. She was a handsome good-tempered girl of twenty-two and after he had seen her and Dangerfield together Charles thought with his step-mother they were very well suited. Surely it was better for Frank to marry a good innocent girl, whose whole past was an open book, than for him to waste his time in pursuing a shadow, and trying to find a young person he had seen only in the street, and at one or two public places.

Charles duly informed Mr. Dangerfield that his relations would leave the Priory in June and spend three or four months at Netherton-on-Sea.

"They'd much better choose a nice lively place," commented Frank; "Netherton's as dull as ditchwater."

"It has risen into note since I went to India, but everyone tells me it is the coming place on the East Coast."

"Well, I don't think Mrs. Tempest will like it. Shall you join the party? if so I shall see something of you. I have an old uncle at Tollesbury Junction five miles off, and I often run down to see him. It was at Netherton I met my unknown."

"And you have been there since for the chance of meeting her again?"

"I have met her again! I have seen her four times in all, though I only spoke to her the first."

"Look here, Frank," said Tempest kindly. "You can't be in earnest. You come of a good old family. You have had a University education and seen the best society in London. You can't really mean to marry a girl you spoke to in the street whose very name even you don't know!"

"If I can get introduced to her I shall try and win a hearing. Oh, I knew you'd laugh at me, old fellow, but it was love at first sight."

"She may be a shop girl!"

"She is a lady," asserted the other. "I expect she's poor. Her gloves were rather shabby, and she travelled third-class."

"Perhaps she's engaged to someone else," suggested Tempest, hopefully.

"I don't think so; she wore no ring. It's no use your preaching prudence to me, Tempest; I tell you the mischief's done. I lost my heart one April day."

"If Netherton's a small place I can't understand your not finding out her name."

Frank shook his head.

"Perhaps she had only just come to live there. I fancy the first time I saw her she had been house-hunting. Something she asked me made me think so."

"What was it?"

"If many people came to Netherton. I told her there was very good society there, and she replied she 'hated society.' She was in deep mourning."

A dead silence. Dangerfield looked at his friend anxiously.

"I suppose you saw the English papers out there?"

"My good fellow, India isn't beyond the pale of civilization, and a regimental club takes all the daily papers. What are you aiming at?"

"It's only I couldn't tell if you knew—Mrs. Dalton is a widow."

"What?"

"Dalton died last August. I believe he has left her badly off, and I thought—" his expressive eyes supplied the rest of the sentence. Tempest shook his head.

"She is as lost to me as though she and not poor Dalton lay dead and buried. I don't know how other people feel about such things, but I could never marry a woman who had passionately loved her first husband any more than I could trust one who had once betrayed my faith."

"It is a long while ago," said Dangerfield, gruffly, "and you have never cared for anyone else. I thought you would be glad to know she was free."

Tempest shook his head.

"I have not been wearing the willow for Alice. I have avoided women since that—that affair, because it seemed to me most of them were false or weak—but I have no regrets for her. I know now that Alice Grey could never have satisfied the cravings of my nature. I don't know if I shall ever care for another woman; but of this I am certain. If I worshipped one ever so, I would not make her my wife unless she gave me love for love!"

CHAPTER VI.

ROSAMOND was certainly the dominant spirit of the little family, and the report she carried back to Bloomsbury of Adelaide House made her mother and sister regard Netherton very favourably; but Mrs. Hurst would fain have taken a smaller house there and not let lodgings. The poor lady thought it awfully *infra dig.* to have strangers as inmates, and the girls had to prove to her most energetically that eighty pounds a-year would not lodge, feed, and clothe three persons before she would hear of their plan.

"Couldn't we eke it out by our capital?" she asked, sadly.

"We might live on the remains of Mr. Carley's cheque for eighteen months," said Rosamond, "but at the end of them we should have to find some way of making money."

"And this is the only way that will keep us together," said Moira. "The person at Adelaide House told Rosamond she had an excellent old servant who would be able to stay on; so you see, mother dear, you wouldn't be worried at all. The servant would see the people and wait at table. I should do the needlework and keep the accounts while Rosamond would order in the things and choose the dinner."

"If only you could have cared for Sir Roger," sighed poor Mrs. Hurst. "There, my dears, I don't want to be a burden on you or a wet blanket, but when I think of the contrast between our prospects six months ago and now it is almost more than I can bear."

However, at last, the girls won a reluctant consent to closing matters with Mrs. Mead; and, then, before their mother had time to change her mind, one lovely April day they all went down to Netherton, and took possession of Adelaide House.

It was a very pretty dwelling, and really furnished in a superior style; but, for the future lodgers, Mrs. Hurst would have been delighted with her abode. So the girls, with loving tact, never discussed the question of "letting" before her, but taking counsel with Jane (who had been Mrs. Mead's factotum for three years), themselves drew up a little plan for future guidance.

Roughly speaking, there were three sitting-rooms and six bedrooms, but they must retain the smallest parlour and three of the upper rooms, so that they had only five to offer to lodgers.

Jane reported that the drawing-room and bedroom above had fetched four guineas in the season, the dining-room "set" went for three, unless the other bedroom was thrown in; but this was often requisitioned by a single guest who took his meals with the family.

"We couldn't do that," said Rosamond; "I should hate anyone who had a right to come to our table and put their knife into our butter."

The season proper did not begin till June; but early in May the first lodgers appeared, two elderly ladies and their maid. They had been to Adelaide House three years running, and were quite intimates of Jane. As their maid waited on them, the question of a second servant did not arise, and Rosamond joyously remarked that it was three guineas and a half a week clear profit.

The Miss Masons were quiet, inoffensive old souls, disposed to be very kind to their fair young ladies and gently compassionate of the mother they never saw.

"They mean well, dear old things," said Moira one day, when she had watched them start for a long drive—the maid humbly occupying the back seat—"but their pity is just a little trying, and I have no doubt they tell their friends that we are reduced gentlewomen who have seen better days. Ugh! pride dies hard, Rose, and sometimes I hate Adelaide House and everything connected with it."

Rosamond nodded.

"It is so dull," she said, with a sigh; "the season will be beginning directly, and Netherton will be quite gay, but you and I shall be out of everything. We don't know a creature in the place, and we are not likely to. You see, Moira, we inherited Mrs. Mead's status with her house; she was known as 'a most respectable woman'

who let lodgings.' Adelaide House has been a lodging-house ever since it was built, and no one would ever think of calling on its mistress."

"Don't lodging-house keepers ever call on each other?" hazarded Moira.

"Heaven forbid! But, no, of course they don't: they wouldn't have time."

"Well," said Moira, "I stilled yawn, "it would be nice to know just one or two people who wouldn't slight us on account of our poverty, or pity us as the Masons do. Confess, Rose, that it is wretchedly dull! Mother reads novels and knits—knits and reads novels, and really gets along pretty well. But I do miss our ponies and carriage. I'd give anything for a really good game of tennis, or a dance, and a dinner-party would seem like the millennium to me!"

"Let's go upstair and sit in the drawing-room," said Rosamond. "Jane says the best rooms never let before June. I believe it's this dreary little room, looking on to nothing but a brick wall, which gives us the blues. After all the sitting rooms at the Priory have one apartment, nine feet square, for meals, boudoir, study and reception room, is a trifle hard."

"Come along," returned Moira, "we'll sit in state in the drawing-room, and make believe we're the people who will presently pay four guineas a-week for the use of it. I begin to wish they would make haste; every week which passes without their coming makes us lose eighty-four shillings!"

Moira sighed as she spoke. How often they had given four guineas for a single article of dress which took their fancy!

The drawing-room was the best feature of Adelaide House. It had two aspects, south and east. Two windows faced the sea, another looked out on to a pretty flower garden, while all three opened on to the verandah round, whose white columns climbed a gloire de Dijon rose, already in full bud for it was a very early season.

Moira took a chair close to the window, flung it open and looked out towards the sea. It was blue as sapphires, and had just a sprinkling of foam to show that it was not so smooth as timid sailors would have wished.

Rosamond went to the piano, and opening it began to play a low dreamy nocturne. They never touched the instrument when the lodgers were at home. In fact they hardly ever went into the drawing-room; both felt shy of getting used to the room because, in that case they would have missed it so terribly when they had to give it up.

Rosamond's nocturne was not half finished when Jane threw open the door and announced,—

"A gentleman about the rooms, Miss Martin."

To do the servant justice, it was not her fault the young ladies were taken unaware. She was crossing the hall, when she saw the gentleman approaching the front door. She opened it before he could knock, and hearing his errand, did not like to keep him waiting on the threshold while she went to warn the sisters. Besides Jane was used to consider a lodger such a prize that much must be sacrificed to secure him.

She knew in an abstract sense that the Miss Martins preferred her to interview the lodgers, but as this gentleman had already seen them she left him to them with no compunction, and closed the door on an as embarrassed trio as could have been found.

Charles Tempest recovered himself first.

"Your landlady has left me to explain my intrusion. I am seeking rooms in Netherthorn, and I like the position of this house. May I ask if you are likely to vacate the rooms soon?"

Moira blushed crimson and looked at Rosamond; the elder girl was equal to the emergency.

"We are not lodgers; my mother is the landlady, but she is not strong, and so Jane—the woman you saw—generally sees to things for her. You can have the rooms this afternoon if they suit you."

Moira came to her sister's help.

"The house is very quiet, and there are no children," she said, repeating Jane's favourite formula. "We have two elderly ladies in the dining-rooms, but they are quite the other side of the house and you would not be troubled by them."

"I have come down to look for a furnished

house for my mother," said Mr. Tempest; "if I find one I might wish to stay in Netherthorn some months."

"The bed-room over this is the same size, the rent is four guineas, and Jane is a good cook," said Rosamond, "perhaps," with a charming smile, "you could come for a week and see how you liked it."

Mr. Tempest agreed. Probably no lodger ever asked fewer questions, but he recognised at once that the sisters were ladies, and he could not bear to treat them as inferiors. Besides, he reflected, if he was uncomfortable he could pay a week's rent and move on. The servant had looked capable and the house seemed clean and well cared for.

"I will go back to the station and tell them to send up my luggage," he said courteously, "will you kindly tell your servant I should like tea at five o'clock?"

He was gone. The sisters took counsel with Jane, who was jubilant.

"Only one gentleman! we are in luck, Miss. I've known four people squeeze themselves into the best bed-room, and a gentleman's easier to do for than ladies. Not so fussy. What did you say his name was, Miss Rose?"

"I never asked him," confessed Rosamond. "Never mind, Jane, it is sure to be on his luggage."

But when the porter brought up a portmanteau and hat box, the sisters had a shock, for on each was painted in neat black letters, C. Tempest, while to make assurance doubly sure, among the many labels half effaced, was a newish looking one proving that the portmanteau had recently travelled from Weston to Paddington.

Moira caught hold of Rosamond as though she needed protection from some danger.

"We must send him away," she said breathlessly; "it would kill mother to have him here."

"We want the money so badly," objected Rose, "and what could we tell Jane, what excuse could we make to him without betraying our secret? No, Moira, we are Martins not Hursts, Charles Tempest never injured the Martins—we shall have to go through with it."

"Oh, don't," pleaded Moira, "to have our worst enemy under our roof seems more than we can bear."

The porter had lingered unduly before he came to Adelaide House, and as Moira spake the gate clanged noisily, Charles Tempest was coming up the front garden; their decision must be made at once,

(To be continued).

PAYING THE PENALTY.

CHAPTER XVIII.

By the great exertion of the doctors, Rachel was brought back from the very verge of death; yet she was by no means out of danger.

She must be taken where there were rest and quiet, they declared—the busy hotel life would completely prostrate her. For instance, to go on some farm would be best for her.

"Anything you say, doctor," returned Andrew, delighted beyond words at the thought of getting out of the fashionable hotel, where everyone seemed to be making fun of him every time he stepped into the dining-room.

One day he asked the proprietor if he had any particular objection to his eating in the kitchen, adding,—

"We all eat in the kitchen at home at the old farm-house. Nobody eats in the parlour there."

The clerks stuffed their handkerchiefs in their mouths to prevent laughing outright at him.

Mr. Davis replied that only the servants eat there.

"I wouldn't mind that a bit," declared Andrew. "At hum the farman's allure fell to and eat alongside o' us."

Upon Mr. Davis's repeated declaration that he could not manage it for him, Andrew had taken his meals in his room. No wonder that he hailed with delight the order to go to the country, with its green fields, and freedom from coat and collar.

"There is a farm-house a mile or two out where they take summer boarders," said Mr. Davis. "In fact, I lease the place to the parties now occupying it. There's only one house for miles around, and that is a few rods away, and is occupied only by a deaf mute. You will not find your neighbour noisy. The patient could go out into the open air, and it will do her a world of good."

So the matter was arranged, and by a strange fate Rachel was taken to the farm-house directly adjoining the one in which Paul Verrell's friend had secreted him.

Mr. Weston and his wife were only too glad to have this addition to their household in summer, as it defrayed much of their expenses.

"She will have a splendid view from her window," said Mrs. Weston, nodding toward the next house. "It overlooks the adjoining little farm with its queer inmate."

"I should be very much pleased to take you through the place," said the farmer, addressing Andrew and his wife.

And thus it happened, looking out wearily from the little attic window, to his great surprise, Paul Verrell saw Andrew and Marion Lee walking across the fields of the adjoining farm.

What were they doing there? he wondered. There was but one explanation that came to him—that they were searching for him.

At first a shudder of agony passed over him, that the friends of his youth should be hunting him down in this way.

He remembered how pleased they had once been with his visits. It seemed to him that he was living in a different world.

All would have gone well with him had not the beautiful Daphne, like a shadow, darkened his path.

How could he ever have fancied himself in love with that bright, bold, daring creature. It had been a case of infatuation and not of love. But he could never undo what had been done, never while the stars shone or the sun gave light.

As Paul watched from his attic window he caught sight of a slim figure reclining in a willow chair on the lawn.

His heart gave one great throb. He knew who it was—it must be Rachel.

The discovery of her near presence brought him so much joy that his friend, when he drove up that evening, was greatly surprised at the change in him.

It was with great difficulty that Paul could restrain himself from rushing out and telling him of his discovery.

"I just drove out to tell you that they are to be your near neighbours," said Dunstan, grimly; "so you had better get out of here as soon as you can. You could not remain a prisoner in the house, and to go out into the grounds would be an experiment which you had better not undertake, unless," he added, with a grave smile, "you are prepared to disguise yourself completely."

"Quite a good suggestion. I think I will do that," said Paul, eagerly. "I have a broad-brimmed straw hat, a pair of farmer's overalls, a pea-jacket, a wig, and a pair of blue goggles, which will make me look like a farm hand. I will don the disguise and stay here," declared Paul.

"I doubt very much whether you could disguise yourself successfully," said his friend, dubiously. "Your walk, your gestures—a thousand things might betray your identity to those who know you so well."

"I will risk it," said Paul. "There is only one difficulty; your servant, the deaf mute, may betray me."

"That is utterly impossible," said Dunstan. "No one hereabouts, save myself, can understand him. Besides, he takes very little notice of anything. Very likely he has not noticed your appearance at all, and therefore will not observe the change."

Although Paul was very much inclined to

doubt this, he found it was actually true. The old man rarely even looked up, and did not detect the change.

"I declare I would not recognise you myself if I met you accidentally in the village," said Dunstan. "There is only one thing wrong with your make-up; your hands are too smooth and white for the gardener which you represent; but a few days' exposure to the sun will remedy that."

And so it proved. Paul spent most of his time in the garden, as near his neighbour's place as he dared approach. He watched with his heart in his eyes, and he was at length rewarded by seeing Rachel's dear form at the window.

He made the acquaintance of Farmer Weston one day when Andrew Lee was not with him, and casually inquired about the sick person whom he had seen.

The loquacious farmer was only too pleased to give him the desired information. This gave him an opportunity to inquire, day by day, how Rachel was getting along, without showing the deep anxiety he felt.

When he heard that she was getting a little stronger, he was filled with the keenest delight. How he wished that there was something he could do for her. He was overjoyed beyond measure when he heard, one day, that the doctors had decided that Rachel should spend part of each day in the grounds.

"We have fixed up a shady nook for her at the end of the garden," went on Farmer Weston, who was telling Paul the good news. "There she will sit most of the time, with her fancy work or a book."

Suddenly a stillness came over Paul and the farmer; for, as they were speaking, Rachel herself came slowly down the bordered path.

"I don't believe I know your name!" asked the farmer, turning to Paul.

"Dunstan," he replied, quickly, assuming his friend's name.

"Oh, a brother, eh, to the young man who owns the place?"

Paul nodded. He was a brother attorney, that was all, and as far as he could stretch the truth.

Rachel would have turned into a side path, but the farmer called to her, and she had no alternative but to approach them.

In his clumsy, awkward fashion, the farmer went through a rough form of introduction. Rachel raised her eyes to the bearded face of the man before her, but they could not pierce the blue glasses.

She did not recognise him.

But if we were to speak—ah! then she would be sure to recognise him.

Rachel paid little heed to the stalwart figure. The stranger seemed to her an awkward, bashful young farmer, like those she was used to seeing at home. But there was something about him that seemed to hold her attention, she could not tell why.

"I am a stranger in this community, but I think I shall like it here," said Rachel, "everyone is so good and kind to me."

He murmured some unintelligible words she did not hear.

"I should like to take long rambles in the fields now and then; but I cannot, for I am lame," sighed Rachel.

How Paul wished with all his heart that he dare pick her up in his strong arms and carry her over the hills and dells toward which her eyes roamed so longingly.

It seemed to him that he had never appreciated the rare beauty and sweetness of Rachel as much as he did then; and to know that she loved him, and that he had wrecked her life, seemed to him a thought more cruel than death for him to endure. He wanted to speak to her, but he dared not, lest the sound of his voice should betray him.

He could scarcely repress the impulse to catch her in his arms and caress the dark hair, as he had done a thousand times before, kiss the pale cheeks and white lips so drawn with anguish, and fold her close to the madly beating heart that loved her so. Then he would start back with the pain of death stabbing his very soul, remembering that it was wrong to have such longings, for

he was now the husband of another, and that other her own twin-sister, Daphne—her treacherous, beautiful, golden-haired twin-sister, who had the face of an angel and the heart of a veritable demon pulsing in her bosom. He turned from her with a shudder, and Rachel wondered why the young man went away and left her so abruptly.

She made her way slowly back to the house, thinking of the awkward stranger with the rough farm-clothes and the long, slender white hands that twitched so nervously. Somehow she could not bring herself to speak to her aunt Marion about the stranger who lived on the adjoining farm. She did not see him again for a week.

Every day Rachel limped down to her rustic seat under the oak tree, and sitting there in the sunshine, with clasped hands and a far-away look in her eyes, she would give herself up to thoughts of Paul, her false lover. She would cry out silently to Heaven from the depths of her heart to grant her one prayer—to give her back his love again. Thus she would sit for long hours, little dreaming that a pair of burning eyes were watching her eagerly from the other side of the hedge-row.

CHAPTER XIX.

"I MUST go away from here," said Paul Verrell. "The sight of her sweet face, day by day, being so near, and yet, so far removed from me by fate, is almost killing me. I cannot stand it this way much longer; it will certainly drive me to desperation. I almost think I am losing my mind."

For three days Paul Verrell studiously avoided the place where he was wont to meet Rachel in her morning rambles; and, to her great surprise, the girl found that she missed the eccentric stranger who had crossed her path so suddenly and as suddenly disappeared.

She found herself listening for his footsteps, just as she had listened for Paul's in that past which was such a bitter-sweet memory to her.

The days lengthened into a week; still he came not; and with a sigh Rachel said to herself—

"Why must every one in whom I take an interest die out of my life?"

Her eyes often wandered over in the direction of the little farm-house.

She was thinking of the stranger one day as she wandered down the path that led over the meadow and down toward a little brook that skirted the fields beyond.

The distance was considerable to Rachel, and she sunk down upon a mossy stone to rest.

Off in the distance, where the marsh lands lay, she could see the birds of prey wheeling about in the air. Could it be that harm had befallen the young man, and that he had wandered off to the swamps, of which such strange stories were told?

When she reached the house, she determined to make inquiries about him of the farmer, and learn whether he had gone away or not.

Quite exhausted from her journey, and finding the air so cool and refreshing, Rachel never knew just how it happened, but somehow she dropped into a deep sleep, wherein she seemed to hear the murmur of the wind and strange, low whisperings. How long she lay there she never knew.

Suddenly she woke up with a start. One glance, and a terrible cry broke from her lips. She sprang to her feet, but her shaking limbs refused to carry her a single step from where she stood.

Standing in the path, directly before her, was a mad bull rushing straight upon her. Its eyes gleamed like fire, and emitted a shower of sparks.

She felt the horrible thing coming nearer and nearer, but she could not move hand or foot to save her life had it been depending upon it. Her very senses seemed reeling, her lips would not even utter the faint cry that came to them.

Nearer and nearer it came. She could feel its hot breath upon her cheeks. Another instant and it would toss her.

"Paul!" she sobbed. The name was rung out

on the air in the most pitiful voice that ever was heard. "Paul, save me!"

Another instant and all would have been over with beautiful Rachel Hilton, had not a tall form sprung quickly forward.

A stout cane whizzed through the air, and the next instant the huge animal was writhing in agony from a well-directed blow.

"Thank Heaven, I have saved you!" cried a ringing voice.

Rachel swayed to and fro, like a leaf in a gale. The next instant she had fallen in a dead faint at the feet of her rescuer.

In a moment he was kneeling beside her.

Neither the wondering birds, nor the sighing breeze that rippled past her ever told of how he caught her in his arms, and covered her face and eyes, and the soft-falling masses of dark hair that lay on her white brow, with passionate kisses.

He knew that it was wrong—that he had no right; but he cried out to himself that it was for the last time in this world. He would never trust himself to look upon her face again, or to come within sound of her voice.

He had made arrangements to go far away on the morrow; he had been undecided about going that day. Something seemed to keep him there. Now he knew what it was—Heaven had decreed that he should save her!

In the bitterness of that hour he cursed himself for ever turning from his allegiance for a pretty-faced will-o'-the-wisp whose only interest in himself was that he was heir to his uncle's fortune.

If Rachel could only know what he suffered in that moment. He wondered that he lived through it, that hearts could endure so much without breaking.

It required the greatest effort of his life to lay her down in the long green grass, and to summon the farm-hands, who were working in the fields, to carry her to the house.

He would not leave the neighbourhood until he heard that she had not suffered from the shock of the great ordeal through which she had passed. After that, he would go quietly away.

He was pacing restlessly up and down his room the next morning, when he saw the old farmer hurriedly crossing the fields.

Paul ran down two steps at a time to meet him, his heart all in a flutter.

"The young girl—how is she?" he asked, hoarsely.

"She doesn't seem to feel so well this morning," said the farmer, "and we've sent for a doctor. It's really too bad that she has taken this sort of turn just now, for she's a mighty pretty girl, and it would be a terrible thing if her relapse resulted fatally."

"It could not take a turn of that kind," answered Paul, with undisguised deep concern written upon every feature. "Of course, her aunt—her friends—are taking the best of care of her. They have not shown any new signs of alarm, have they?"

"No; they are hopeful that she passed the crisis favourably—that is only a sort of weakness, from which she will recover before long."

Paul Verrell was silent a moment. During that time he was gathering courage to ask an all-important question.

In that self-same moment a beautiful, tear-stained face, framed in soft, nut-brown hair, flitted before his mental vision as he had seen it last in that eventful time. A quivering, tremulous voice sounded in his ears, praying loudly for her lover to hasten to her rescue, and begging him, for the love they once bore each other, to save her from the raging bull. A moment more, and he had stood before her, and when she had fallen into his arms, too horror-stricken for words, he had carried the drooping, inanimate little figure away from danger, and had her removed safely to her home. That meeting had almost broken his heart, he told himself.

Paul drew near the old farmer, and all unconsciously he laid a white hand on his shoulder, and his eyes, which burned strangely bright, looked into the other's as he asked, huskily,—

"Perhaps she—the young lady, is delirious from fever. Does she say anything that would lead

her friends to suppose she has something that is troubling her!"

The farmer drew back, a thoughtful expression crossing his face.

"I will tell you," he answered, shaking his head sadly; "but I don't want it to go further, young man. Young girls often get strange freaks into their pretty heads, and I am sure this one has had a kinder love romance in her life, young as she is."

"If she has had a lover, does she care for him now, I wonder?" the young man asked, with pitiful eagerness, calming himself by a great effort to hear the answer.

"She must love him a great deal, I should say, to be lying there sobbing over his going away, asking if she could only see him once more, and begging him to forget another girl, whom I am very much inclined to believe has at some time or other crossed her path and taken him from her."

Paul was conscious that his face was flushing painfully, that the hand which grasped the farmer's shoulder was trembling fearfully. He was almost betraying the great love which he had for Rachel, and the usually calm, steady man was too much agitated to attempt to frame a reply.

Paul Verrell stood motionless before him for another minute as the farmer went on—

"I have no patience with men of that kind, who can wound the tender hearts of girls without even so much as regret. There is no punishment severe enough for them for their cruel deception. It is the wickedest sin they could be guilty of under heaven!"

A great change came over the young man, and he made up his mind then and there that as soon as Rachel recovered he would come back and have a short interview with her, though the painful ordeal killed him. He would confess all that had taken place after Daphne had come to the farm-house that fatal day, even to that mockery of a marriage which had been so short-lived; plead on his bended knees for her forgiveness, and when she granted it to him, then he would go far away where she should never see his face again.

"You are rather an intelligent young man, and I should like to have you come over and see what you think of the case."

Paul needed no second invitation, but accompanied the farmer with alacrity.

Rachel lay on a bed, moaning piteously as he entered the room.

It touched him to the heart to see how white her face was. There was no recognition in the blue eyes, whose glance swept past him. Aunt Marion was bending over her, but she suddenly drew back with bitter words on her lips.

"She is always thinking of him," she muttered. "I only wish the vengeance of Heaven would strike him for what he has done, for I never can forgive him—never!"

Paul drew back. How hardly they must feel against him to speak of him like that!

He felt very angry with himself for coming there.

Aunt Marion came hurriedly toward him, holding out her hands, saying—

"May Heaven shower blessings on you, sir, for saving our precious darling's life!"

Paul turned pale beneath his disguise. He wondered which prayer Heaven would hear—to curse him or to bless him. Before he could utter the words that rose to his lips, a strange event happened.

CHAPTER XX.

PAUL moved hurriedly up to the couch and bent over the sufferer. A thrill seemed to pass over the girl's whole frame, her lips smiled a faint welcome. Paul took the seat beside her.

How he longed to raise the little white hand to his lips and to cover it with kisses!

It so happened that for a moment the attention of those who were present was called to another matter, and Paul found himself practically alone with Rachel.

He called her name softly, eagerly. His voice

seemed to bring her back from the reverie into which she had wandered.

"Rachel," he whispered, "do—do you not know me? Hush! do not cry out or utter a word. It is I—Paul!"

Saying the words, he snatched off the glasses and the false moustache, and looking up, she recognised him.

"Hush!" he whispered; "do not let them know it is me, or they will not let me remain here."

A little glad cry broke from her lips—a cry that seemed to well up from the very depths of her heart.

"Oh, Paul!" she whispered, faintly, "have you come back to me at last?"

Faint as the words were, Aunt Marion heard them, and with one bound she reached the bedside.

One glance, and with a cry of rage so fierce that those who heard it never forgot it, she sprang like a tiger toward him.

"Is it you?" she cried. "Ah, I thought so! Something told me that you, who pretended to be a farmer living next door, were in disguise, and I had my suspicions all along that you might be Paul Verrell. Andrew!" she cried, "come here quickly! I have tracked him down at last! See the villain has dared come into our very midst to look upon his fiendish work!"

With the strength and agility of a tigress she swayed him to and fro, shook him in her strong grasp, hurling the wildest of epithets at him from between her clenched teeth.

"It was not enough that you deserted Rachel," she cried, "broke your betrothal vows for a younger, prettier face, but you tried to put her out of the world when you abducted her from the hotel. It was only by a miracle that we saved her."

"I do not want to lay my hands on him, lest I should commit murder!" Andrew cried, excitedly. "You know that, Marion."

"Will you not hear what I have to say in my own defence, Andrew and Marion Lee?" he cried. "For Rachel's sake, listen to me. You owe me that much at least."

"We owe you nothing but our everlasting hatred!" cried the old man, fiercely, trembling with rage. "I will call the police and hand you over to them; you shall suffer for what you have done."

"No, no!" cried Rachel, faintly. "I forgive all, Aunt Marion! Do not do him harm!"

Just then an idea came to Marion Lee that she meant to execute at once.

"There is but one way, sir, by which you can save yourself," she returned, "and that is to make reparation by keeping your troth to Rachel. If you refuse, then the fate you so richly deserve will be meted out to you in full measure."

Paul fairly gasped for breath. It was like holding out nectar to a man dying of thirst. Ah! what would he not have given to have wedded the idol of his heart!

How could he tell them the bitter truth?

"I will give you just one half hour to make up your mind," said Marion Lee, thrusting him into a small apartment at the rear of the room.

It was a sort of large, old-fashioned clothespress in which Paul found himself, with a high, small window in it scarcely larger than his two hands, and affording barely light enough for him to survey the place about him.

"I will remain here but a short time," he told himself, with a ring of bitterness in his voice. "I am afraid the happiness that I intended to bring to Rachel will end in disaster. I had only meant to take one last look at her, and then to go far away."

Then, in the midst of his painful reverie, a strange thought came to him—a subtle temptation, as it were, that he could not shake off, try as hard as he would. They had both insisted upon him marrying Rachel, and would accept no excuse for its not taking place.

It was surely a case of fate bringing them together. If they would accept no other alternative than a marriage, would it be so very wrong, he asked himself, to conceal from them his former union, and make good his troth to Rachel whom he idolized, by a marriage with her?

He was only human, and so great was his love for her that, for the first time in his life, Paul Verrell allowed himself to be overcome by the awful temptation, and he made up his mind that he would wed the girl of his choice, and surely Heaven would never permit the other farce he had entered into with Daphne Hilton to be found out. It was a desperate chance; he would trust everything to fate.

He waited calmly until Marion Lee again put in an appearance.

"Well," she said, grimly, as she stood there facing him, "what have you to say, Mr. Paul Verrell?"

"You really wish the marriage to take place?" he asked, his voice trembling with eagerness.

"To be sure!" she returned, with asperity. "Anything that will add to my poor Rachel's happiness is my first thought. She loves you. Since the hour of your base desertion she has failed rapidly. This step may be the means of saving her life."

Paul listened with bated breath. Those last few words decided him against all further hesitation.

For Rachel's sake, then, he made up his mind that he would let the marriage go on, come what might. If trouble came of it, he would face it out to the bitter end. Other men had risked everything—ay, life, liberty, everything on earth—for the sake of the women they loved, and will again, through all the ages to come.

"Let the marriage go on," he said, turning to Marion Lee—"the sooner the better."

A sigh broke from Marion's lips.

"You should never have her, after the terrible trick you played upon her, if I could help myself. When a man deceives a woman once, he is never again to be trusted; though the whole world believed in him, I should still distrust him. I have lost all respect for you. Do not think that your ready compliance to marry Rachel deceives me one particle; you are simply marrying her because she inherits your uncle's vast wealth."

"Stop there!" he cried. "It is false! Say whatever else you like, but do not accuse me of mercenary motives in connection with this marriage, for it is false. Whatever I may do, will be for love of Rachel alone."

When Andrew heard this decision he compressed his lips tightly together.

"I shall not have a word to say," he muttered, "and if trouble comes of it, he cannot blame me."

When the matter was placed before Rachel, that Paul was pleading so very hard to marry her then and there, the light that came over her face was pitiful to behold.

"You must be mistaken, it is Daphne whom he loves, and not me!" And her voice quivered a little.

"No!" cried Paul, springing quickly forward, "it is you whom I love, Rachel! Trust me—believe me! I would lay down my life for you! Your sister's beauty fascinated me, I will admit, but with such women, when they are out of sight they are out of mind. I will devote my whole life to making you happy!"

For answer, she placed her little hand in his, whispering faintly:

"I will trust to you, Paul."

Rachel decided that she must be married at the little church at the edge of the lane.

She was too weak to walk so far just yet, and so it was postponed till the following week.

When Paul left the farm-house on that day in which the decision was reached, Marion watched him out of sight from the window.

"I do not expect to ever lay eyes upon him again," she declared, grimly. "The marriage should have taken place here. He fled from Rachel before, and what has been done once can be done again."

"Oh, I think he will come back," said Andrew. "If he doesn't it will not kill Rachel."

"I am not so sure about that," said Aunt Marion, grimly. "She could never stand another blow dealt at her heart. Despite all, she still trusts him."

Quite contrary to Aunt Marion's expectations, Paul came the next day, and the next, and each succeeding day during the week that followed,

until at last the day arrived upon which the wedding was to take place.

It was thought best that Paul should not reveal his identity in the neighbourhood, as it would re-open the terrible scandal which had begun to die out.

The marriage could take place quietly and they could go back to the farm afterward.

Once out of this locality Paul could throw off his disguise, and be his own natural self again.

To Rachel his presence was as sunshine is to a drooping flower. She rallied with amazing rapidity, and upon her marriage-morn she looked so sweet and fair, so bright-eyed, with the wild-rose bloom blushing dyeing her dimpled cheek, that it was hard to believe she had passed through so much suffering and sorrow.

Paul caught his breath as he gazed at her, and every pulse in his being thrilled. How he loved her—ay, idolised her!

He would rather have given up his whole soul then and there, than to have parted with Rachel. He would brave Heaven and earth to call her his own.

"Ah! was there ever so mad a love!" he asked himself. He would go blindly on to the end, without counting the cost—live for love, and love alone, letting each day bring what it might, not daring to think of the future.

CHAPTER XXI.

BOTH "Aunt Marion and Andrew, and even Rachel noticed how pale Paul was as they drew up in a carriage before the door. The little church was scarcely a mile distant, yet it was thought best for Rachel not to exert herself to walk even that distance.

The farmer and his wife at whose house they had been stopping little dreamed of the tragedy that was being enacted under their very eyes. They thought that the young man from the adjoining farm had fallen in love with the pretty lassie girl at first sight—that his saving her from the mad bull had led to a betrothal and a hasty marriage.

"Ah, well, what is to be, will be," they had declared. "It was surely 'fate' that she should come here to meet the one Heaven intended for her."

What a beautiful morning it was! How the sun shone and the birds sang! How sweet was the breath of the wild-rose and the clambering honey suckle which the breeze whistled toward them! How calm and bright all nature looked! Suddenly she looked thoughtful, and her dark eyes wandered wistfully over the distant hills.

"What are you thinking of, Rachel?" asked Paul, wistfully, wondering whether she was regretting the step.

"I am perfectly happy but for one thing," she said, "and that is, I should have liked to have my sister Daphne at my wedding."

The watch which Paul had taken from his pocket, and was glancing carelessly at at that moment, fell from his hands with a crash to the carriage floor. The face that he turned to Rachel was so terribly pale and haggard that for a moment it startled her. The look of terror in his eyes frightened her.

"Are you ill, Paul?" she cried, anxiously.

He shook his head, and made a faint attempt to smile; but the smile died away on his lips, leaving them very pale.

"Have you broken your watch, Paul?" she asked, in the same breath.

"It looks very much like it," he answered, pointing to it as it lay at his feet. "It is a total wreck; the cases are wrenched off, the crystal broken—even the hands are gone."

"But it is still ticking," said Rachel; "don't you hear it?"

"Some hearts go on pulsing even though life has literally ended," he muttered.

"I do hope it is not a bad omen, Paul," murmured the girl, pathetically.

"I shall make your life so happy that you will never run the hour that you became mine," he answered.

The little church had been made ready, and the Vicar himself came forward quickly to greet them.

He looked gravely enough as he saw the young man stoop to recover the fragments of the time-piece. Once before just such an accident had happened to a prospective bridegroom. It had not augured well for his marriage. Upon his return there was the saddest ending of a beautiful wedding that had ever been heard of for years. One of the horses took fright, and the lovely young bride was killed. But he made no mention of this to the bridal couple whom he escorted to the church.

It almost seemed a dream to Rachel, the words that were uttered and the responses which she made.

Paul's face was as white as marble as he made his responses and listened while the minister of God, believing that all was well, pronounced them man and wife.

Paul bent his head and kissed Rachel, but his lips were as cold as ice, and there were no words issuing from them.

There was a moment of unbroken silence, then he led her out into the sunshine, back to the carriage.

"How grave and thoughtful the clergyman looked," said Rachel. "I never before realized how solemn marriage is. Why, it almost seemed to me that an angel was looking out of the clouds and in through the open window, and listening to every word that was said. Why, Paul, you are surely ill!" she cried, as he sank back into a seat with a gasping cry.

"No, no!" he muttered, hoarsely. "I felt a chill, that was all. I am better now. We will stop at that little spring by the roadside; a draught of cold water will set me straight. Do not say anything to the rest of the folks in the carriage following. It does not amount to anything, I can assure you."

The words which Rachel had uttered sank deep down into his heart.

He realised that by allowing this marriage to go on he had braved Heaven's and man's anger. It had not occurred to him that the terrible sin he was about to commit was against Rachel whom he loved; that it would be the greatest wrong he could do her to abide by this marriage.

Paul tried to get strength enough to tell her all. The words would not come to him. They died away on his lips.

He stopped at the spring, and forming a cup with his hands, he drank a copious draught.

"Let us sit down here and rest a moment under the shady trees. I am sure, Paul, that you are quite well. You certainly look fit."

He was just about to seat himself upon a fallen log, when a little cry from Rachel held him back.

"Do not sit down there, Paul," she cried. "See, there is a bird's nest directly under that branch yonder, and the mother bird is ready to make war upon you."

Scarcely had the words been uttered ere the mother bird flew from the nest, and boldly attacked Paul.

He raised his cane to deal it a blow, but Rachel caught his uplifted arm.

"No, no, Paul, husband," she said; "you must not do that. The little bird means no wrong in springing to the rescue of those it loves. It is its nature to protect from harm those whom it loves."

Paul turned and looked at her with a white face. Her words seemed to fairly electrify him. He stood looking at her as if rooted to the spot. The words she had uttered seemed to him like a voice speaking to him from out of the high heavens.

"Heaven gave even the birds the instinct to watch over those whom they love, to shield them from harm, while she whom I love has had the cruellest, basest deception practised upon her by the man whom she loves better than her own life!" he said.

It had not occurred to him in that light before; but now he saw it all differently. How could he tell her that which she believed a marriage was but a mockery, that he was the husband of another, and that other her own sister Daphne?

It would certainly be the last straw, under which she would certainly give way. He said to himself he deserved a bullet through his heart.

(To be continued.)

A WOMAN'S STRATAGEM.

—
—
—

(Continued from page 273.)

"Nina, Nina—you did not think I mistrusted you!"

"Oh! no—no—not that—but you might have thought I had done something imprudent—and yet you would have told me. I was so unhappy. Then I was afraid of your finding out about Frank. I got so desperate, I wanted the marriage over, and then I could tell you. But I have lost so much—I should have been so happy when you were with me, and it was all spoilt."

She was crying now in very earnest—crying disappointed, remorseful tears over the lost joy and the little cloud that had come between her and her husband.

Alan smoothed the bright, tumbled hair for some minutes, perhaps too moved himself to say much, save a few whispered appeals "not to cry."

"I have something to tell you, too," he said, when he could speak. "I understand you—you did not mistrust me, nor I you, dearest. I think we were both mistaken, and I ought to have spoken and explained—only I was afraid of the very thing you are breaking your heart over now."

"Oh! you can't have done what I have," she sobbed. "I don't want to hear anything—I only want you to forgive me. Yet, indeed—in-deed, I didn't think you mistrusted me. It is all a puzzle, except that."

"A puzzle you must put out of this pretty head. I'll forgive anything you like. That Mrs. Manton is the most confounded mischief-maker in London. Nina, dear, I want to tell you what made me first think I had been a selfish fellow, and hadn't half kept all the promises I was so ready to make."

Nina dried her tears and fired up.—

"He had—he was the dearest, the best!" she said, with her blue eyes glowing indignantly; and Alan almost laughed at the sudden change.

"No, dear," he said, more gravely; "that isn't quite true, though you may think it is. I heard here and there whispers about some one who came here constantly—no one seemed to know who—and I, like a fool, never dreamt of Frank, because I thought it was all off. I never doubted you for a minute, but I couldn't bear my wife to be talked about. I thought it was my fault—that I had left you too much alone, and you had, without knowing there might be harm done, welcomed a companionship that filled up the gap I selfishly left. It might be any one of our friends—you spoke of them all—but I never tried to fix on any one, and to say a word to you seemed like insult; besides, it might be all gossip. That was why I stayed more at home, Nina—not to watch you, Heaven knows!—only to try and be all I had promised to be."

Nina's hand, lying in his, tightened itself in his grasp almost convulsively.

"Who talked of me!" she said, with her lips growing white.

"You mustn't take it to heart like that, my darling," said her husband, hastily, her looks frightened him so. "It began, I know, with that wretched Manton. She has never forgiven you, and it's the merest gossip that will die away. I never believed a word of it."

"No, I know," still with her large eyes full of pain.

"But if you are so unhappy about it, I shall think I have done wrong to say a word even to exonerate myself. Come, sweetheart, look on it all as I do, for you know, Nina"—very earnest and handsome he looked as he went on—"I think if this had not pulled me up you might have been sorry I had ever cared for you or you for me."

"Why!" she said, with her face full of wonder. It seemed a pity to open her eyes, but he did it very tenderly, with a half-smile at her innocence.

"I was always thinking of myself, Nina, very little of you; always after some pleasure, without much thought of yours; and if that went on

long I should learn to be very happy without you, and love would have grown cold. You do not believe me! It is true."

"But you could not be always tied to me; you are strong and I am not."

"Are we so separate then? That is just what we have been saved from. Men are not like women; no allurements win you from love; but we are often less tenacious, I don't trust myself as you trust me, and you will understand better all I mean when you are older. Now you think I could not fail in love."

"Yes; you never did."

"Well, keep your trust. I hope now I shall never forfeit it; and I think you fretted sometimes—were lonely and weary. You will be better for a little more of me, graceless as I am."

It was one of those jests that are uttered when self-command is very nearly breaking down.

Nina put a soft, little hand over his lips; there was a witching impetuosity, too, in the touch. He might have accused himself till he was dumb, and she would have held to her faith that even if he did stray he would come back to her.

She knew she must not say much, though, and laid her face silently against his breast with such a clinging fondness in the movement that it wanted no word to show him all she meant.

Poor Mrs. Forrester might have waited till her patience was exhausted; they had forgotten all the world but themselves, till Herbert suddenly recalled his promise.

"Poor mother!" he said, half laughing; "let me go to her, little one, and tell her all about your wickedness. She'll come round like a jewel, never fear. After all, the thing is for Agnes to be happy! and I'll try and like Frank better for your sake. He has rather won me with his pluck. Poor Digby! you must be very good to him, blue-eyes. I don't think I can quite forgive you for siding against him."

There was a little scene of reconciliation between mother and daughter that evening, and a half promise to forgive the runaways. Alan set himself to work with praiseworthy energy to make the way smooth, and took Papa Forrester in hand with great success. Then Agnes and Frank both wrote, and seemed in such a paradise—for the time being, at any rate—that, perhaps, visions of their long past honeymoon days helped to soften the parental hearts.

Anyhow, things were clearing. As to Digby he spoke very generously about it. He made no secret to sympathizing Nina that he was very fond of Agnes.

"But," said he, "if she couldn't love me it is best as it is. She couldn't have been happy."

Nina liked this speech so much she thought it no breach of confidence to repeat it to her husband; and from henceforth, Digby was quite a privileged person in the Hill-street *village*.

The runaways came back to that hospitable home, and Captain Herbert met Frank very frankly and warmly; and, though he chaffed Agnes, showed very plainly that whatever his former views he meant to stand their friend. No doubt his zeal was stimulated by sundry commendations from Nina.

Somehow between them a meeting was brought about, and then papa and mamma began to find out that Frank was a nice, clever fellow, not a flirt at all, and to be glad he was their son-in-law, *nolens volens*.

"Quite a happy family!" said Mrs. Manton, sweetly, to Captain Herbert. "And I suppose Mr. Waverley will be another pattern husband—like you. I never expected it of you!"

The little sneer did not hurt him as it had once. He answered, carelessly,—

"I've been a bit of a fool, but I've sense enough left to find out that I can get at home all the attractions I ever did outside."

Mrs. Manton had her card full that night when Captain Herbert asked the honour, &c., and he straightforward walked off and danced with the prettiest girl in the room.

"Do you think you're quite equal to it, Nina?" said Alan Herbert, one day in the following May. "Don't be too venturesome."

Nina laughed up at him scornfully.

"You are so frightened, poor fellow! Didn't I tell you Dr. Marden was delighted with me? I shall do famously. I promise you I won't dance too much."

The reception rooms in the Hill-street house were not very large, but they looked lovely with their tall mirrors and exquisite flowers—flowers everywhere, from the hall to the farthest drawing-room, and Nina felt the pardonable pride of a very young hostess, for never before had she received so large a party.

"How pretty she is," said Lady Mary Danvers, heartily, as she entered with her mother, "and how lovely her dress is. Doesn't she look ever so much better? I declare, mamma, Mrs. Manton looks quite old beside her. And there is Mrs. Waverley—I must go and speak to her."

"The Herbarts will be quite an acquisition if they are going to receive," was the general opinion.

"The most charming little dance," said one of the society's, and Nina tamed the paper over to her husband, laughing, when she read it.

"There, see the lustre I shed on your name!" said she. "But, indeed, Alan, it is your own doing."

"I should like to know how?"

"I think you were right what you said the day Agnes was married," she said, thoughtfully, "no, not about yourself—about my fretting without you."

He was standing on the hearth, she near him; he stretched out his hand to her, and she came to his side. She looked prettier than ever with the light of returning health in her eyes, but he was not thinking of that as he gazed down into her face.

"You are happier now?" he said.

"I was happy then, but now—oh! it frightens me sometimes! Health, and love, and ease—so much love! it cannot last."

"And if it does not, what then?"

"We shall always be together, you mean?" she said, quickly; "but things may be hard to bear even then."

"Very hard; but so long as the supreme love is left—"

"Ah, hush!" the girl said, softly and rapidly, "I can't bear that thought just now. Is that wrong?"

"I don't know, darling; I think not. Don't be afraid of happiness," he said; "as I said before, if it is ever broken up, so long as we have each other—. But that is forbidden."

She smiled brightly.

"Well, if I am to be happy, please take me for a ride—you know I have had so little of it."

"Run and dress then, little witch!" and as she danced out of the room he looked after her with a smile about the handsome mouth.

This time last year—he saw so clearly where he had stood—now he had no fear for himself. They had been so much together—he nurse and lover and husband in one; she patient, bright, infinitely loving, that he knew she held him with a power so strong that it could never be broken. And the chains her little hands had woven he loved. His place by her couch had long been the dearest to him, for he had shared so much in her sufferings, he did not care to have his joys apart.

"I was afraid about Alan once," Agnes had said to her sister, one day. "I don't mind telling you now you are the first and the last thing he thinks of. Do you remember that day you defended him?"

"Yes, I remember," Nina had answered; "but it was not all thoughtlessness, I know now; and, besides, Agnes dear, though he told me about it himself, and I see now as I did not then all he meant, I still think that even if we had been estranged he would have come back to me—my love must have drawn him."

And she held that faith unshaken.

THE END.

A new lead for deep-sea sounding carries a cartridge which explodes on touching the bottom. A submerged microphone receives the sound, and the depth is estimated from the time occupied by the lead in sinking to the bottom.

NAMES AND THEIR LATIN DERIVATION!

—102—

L.—LATIN MALE NAMES.

THE Christian names derived from the Latin tongue are numerous, as might be expected from the greatness of the general debt which all modern languages owe to the speech of Rome.

Anthony (or Antony) was a name rendered famous by a Roman, Marcus Antonius—one of three who once held conjunct rule over the world. We therefore place it among the appellations borrowed from Rome, though it is derived from a Greek term signifying "dourishing." Anthony Vandike, the celebrated portrait painter of England (though Dutch by birth), and Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, are examples of men of note who have borne the name in our island.

Augustus is a word which radically signifies "increasing," "waxing in honour," and in this sense was given as a supplementary name to the first of the imperial Caesars, since whose time it has been common in the families of princes. As there is no necessity whatever for kings and nobles having a monopoly of all the fine names, we are glad to observe Augustus "increasing," as befits it, in credit and favour among the humbler orders of society. It was in compliment, it is usually understood, to Caesar Augustus, that the appellation of August was bestowed on the eighth month of the year.

The name of Caesar itself, it may be remarked here, is occasionally used as a Christian name. It most probably signifies, etymologically, "well-haired." From being the generic appellation of the emperors of Rome, Caesar has been adopted by other potentates in various quarters of the world. In Germany, for example, it was thus used in the form of "Kaiser," and we believe the northern word "Czar" is to be traced to the same source.

Boniface is a name which was much esteemed by the early Christians, and which many worthy Fathers of the Church were well pleased to bear. But Farquhar's use of it, in "The Beau Stratagem," has driven the word out of all grave society. He gave it to old "Bill Boniface," pretty well known upon the road, as the saying is, and since that time none but a landlord could endure it. Boniface has an excellent signification—"a well-doer."

Clement and Constantine are two names from the Latin—the first signifying "mild" or "merciful," and the second, "resolute," "standing firm by anything." These words are not so much used, like many other names with a good sound and meaning, as they ought to be.

Felix is a name in this same and said condition; it means "happy."

The next we have to notice was a favourite with the rosy monks of other days, though, by some unaccountable award of fate, the name is no more to be heard among men. We allude to the name of Hilary, which signifies "merry" or "cheerful." Possibly it was doomed to oblivion from the dislike of the Reformers to the very names which the monastic brotherhood loved to use.

Laurence is an agreeable name, and signifies "laurel-like" or "laurel-crowned," being derived from the Latin "laurus," a laurel. Laurence Sterne, the English Rabelais (though some would, perhaps, be inclined to arrogate that title for another Churchman, Swift), is the most noted man who has ever held the name in Britain.

Lionel, "a little lion," in its etymological sense, is an excellent denomination for the bold and healthy youngster intended to figure in the ranks of war.

Martin is also a good martial name, "martial" being its proper signification. Though a son of the Church, most appropriately was the appellation given to Martin Luther, who—not to speak of his battles with canons, cardinals, and conclaves—had even in his life strange personal contests (as he tells us) with the enemy of mankind.

Maurice means one of Moorish origin, "sprung

of a Moor." A patriotic prince of the ancient house of Orange is the only eminent person who now occurs to us as having been named Maurice; and we mention this by way of recommending his history as being extremely interesting.

Oliver is from the Latin word "oliva" an olive tree. Two most renowned men bore this name—Cromwell and Goldsmith. The olive being an emblem of peace, the name might often be used most appropriately, seeing that the births of children in many cases form a bond of amity between dissentients.

Patrick has the sense of "a noble" or "patrician." The well-known saint of this name was quite deserving of it, for, if we may trust the song:

"Saint Patrick was a gentleman;"

and more than a gentleman no patrician can be.

Peregrine is significant of "foreign," or "outlandish," to use a common phrase. We recollect no eminent person of the name, excepting the martial nephew of Commodore Truncheon, Peregrine Pickle.

In a somewhat similar condition is the term Tristam, which was borne by the famous Shandy, and signifies "sad."

II.—LATIN FEMALE NAMES.

Arabella is first in alphabetical order of the female names derived from the Latin, and means a "fair altar." Whether this word was originally suggested by the conceit that woman is a shrine at which many vows are offered up, we cannot say; but certainly we have seen many fair ones whose attractions rendered them worthy of this pretty name.

Barbara is from the same source as our word "barbarous," but has properly the softer meaning of "strange" or "foreign."

Beatrice signifies "making happy."

Cecilia (and the less common male name Cecil) have in the Latin the signification "grey-eyed," or, perhaps rather, "dim-sighted."

Clara is one of the finest of our female names. It has the meaning of "clear," or "bright."

Constance means "resolute."

Grace, is one of the sweetest of all the names given to Christian women, signifies simply "favour," or grace in the sense of favour.

Felicia has the signification of "happy."

Julia, is a name in rather an awkward predicament, if Leigh Hunt (to whom we are much indebted in these explanatory remarks on names) be correct in his translation of the term Julius, of which Julia is the feminine form. Julius, he says, means "soft-haired" or "moosy-bearded"—evidently thinking the last phrase at the same time the most literary or radically correct. Now what, in the name of horror, are we to do with a moosy-chinned Julia, or, still worse a Juliet, for they are all of a kin! As the appellation of Julia, however, is too fine a one to be given up, every lover must resolve to think of the name he sighs over only in the sense of soft-haired or silken-tressed.

Lettitia, usually shortened into Lettice, denotes "joy." No name could be better than this, whether the word is thought of as falling from parents or from lovers' lips. A sweet English poetess graced this name—Lettitia Eliza Lander.

Lucy is a favourite name with almost all. It is derived from the same Latin word as the adjective "lucid," and has much the same meaning. Never was the image which one instinctively associates with the name of Lucy better painted than in the lines which Wordsworth puts into the mouth of Nature, when he paints that power as proposing to mould a maiden to her own tastes:

She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee, across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And her shall be the breathing balm,
And her's the silence and the calm,
Of mute, incenseant things.

The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her, and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place,
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell.

Mabel is one of the good old names once borne by ancient spectated dames who lived in the castles of mighty barons, and told all sorts of traditional stories to the ladies of long nights, and were by them much reverenced withal. Such, at least, is the idea attached to the name in our mind, derived possibly more from old silly novels than from reality. Mabel is either from Mabelle, signifying "my fair," or contracted from amabilis, "lovely" or "amiable." In sound and sense, whichever way is right, Mabel is well worthy of being perpetuated.

Olivia is a good name, derived, like Oliver, from the symbol of peace, the olive.

Patience means what in common speech the word implies. There is an over-homeliness in this name, which certainly constitutes an objection to its general use.

Never, perhaps, was there an appellation so consistent in its meaning with the impression we have of those who bear it as Priscilla. A Priscilla is an antiquated, starched demoiselle in nine cases out of ten, and the word, with a touch almost of irony, or satire in it, signifies a little "ancient." Avoid Priscilla, ye matrons of Britain! for, in spite of the old interrogative saying, there is something in a name.

To Prudence, which denotes what it professes to do, we have the same objection as to Patience.

Rosa, of which Rose is the prettier form, denotes simply "a rose." The name is redolent of all that is sweet and fragrant, and if we had fifty sweethearts, wives, or daughters—to the conversion of which IF into certainty the law of the land (happily, it may be, for ourselves) would in some respects object—we should not care if they were all Roses.

To close this catalogue of baptismal names from the Latin, we have but one other to allude to, namely, Ursula; and how this appellation came to be given to any mortal woman we cannot guess. One unconsciously thinks of an aged woman, stooping, withered, and wrinkled, at mention of the name of Ursula! but the etymology justifies even worse thoughts, for the word signifies a "female bear." Can anyone, knowing this, have such a name pronounced over a child at the font?

THE natives of Alaska seldom change their clothes, unless they are worn out. They are considered the filthiest race of beings on the earth.

In Peru the cotton plant rises to the distinction of a tree, instead of the comparatively diminutive shrub which grows in some countries. The tree commences bearing fruit from when it is two years old, and it continues to bear every year for forty or fifty years.

It is generally supposed that frequent weeping is injurious to the eyes. This, scientist assert, is a great mistake, as a copious shower of tears washes the eyeballs, cleanses the glands about them, and generally improves their condition. They do not, however, exercise a beneficial effect upon the eyelids, but cause puffiness and great inflammation. What one might call the sentimental effects of tears is a most interesting study. It has frequently been said by unsusceptible people that tears are a confession of weakness. This, however, is not true. Weeping is caused by a vibration of the nerves of the eyes, and is a purely physical act, superinduced, of course, by mental agitation and bodily pain. Men are less likely to weep than women, because their nerves are not so sensitive. Physicians universally agree that weeping when one is in sore distress of mind or body is a most beneficial operation. It relieves nerve strain and may prevent an attack of insanity. Naturalists have often remarked that no member of the ape family can shed tears, although in other respects they are so very like human beings, but the ape has no lacrimal gland, and, therefore, this sign of distress is impossible.

A Handsome Christmas Present or New Year's Gift.

"KNOWLEDGE IS POWER."

A GENUINE OFFER.

25s. Book for 8s. 6d.
(CARRIAGE FREE.)

NO HOME SHOULD BE WITHOUT ONE.

Ogilvie's Encyclopaedia

OF
Useful Information
AND
World's Atlas.

No Single Book ever before contained such a wealth of Knowledge.

A COMPLETE ILLUSTRATED LIBRARY IN ITSELF.

A universal assistant and treasure-house of information on every conceivable subject, from the household to the manufactory. In short, gives information about everything, is absolutely indispensable to every one in all walks of life; the contents being so separated, indexed, and arranged, that they can be turned to at once. It is the

Best Book of Information ever Issued.

SIZE OF ENCYCLOPEDIA:
9 by 11½ INCHES. 666 PAGES.

The Articles are written by men whose lives have been devoted to the subjects treated, are short and concise, but contain full information up to date. It is to be consulted on every subject that arises in every day life, by old and young alike. It contains a complete Illustrated Atlas of the World, embellished with

MANY MAGNIFICENTLY-ENGRAVED COLOURED MAPS,

and a description of every country under the sun, besides much other matter relative to the Home, the Farm, the Factory, a Dictionary of Statistics—many Useful Tables, Poetical Selections, Synonyms, Famous Bridges and Ships, How to Calculate, How to Cook, How to Get Rich, How to Cure all Diseases, How to Succeed in Business, Tables of Weights and Measures, and

HUNDREDS OF OTHER TOPICS OF GREAT VALUE TO EVERY PERSON

who desires to be up to the times. To see the Book is to want it.

Encyclopedias are expensive when purchased complete, and few can afford to pay several pounds for a work of that kind, and if an Encyclopedia is taken in small parts, the cost of binding it is as much as the price at which we offer this book complete and strongly bound. Any household that contains it is furnished with a real Library, containing something of interest, inform, and amuse every member of the family, old and young.

By Special Arrangement with the Publishers of the "Encyclopedia of Useful Information and Atlas of the World" we are enabled to offer to our Readers this Magnificent 25s. Volume for 8s. 6d., carriage free, and those wishing to secure a copy should send us a P.O. for the amount at once, as the number of copies of the work at our disposal is limited.

COUPON.

Please send me One Copy of "Ogilvie's Encyclopedia of Useful Information and World's Atlas," for which I enclose P.O. value 6s. 6d.

Name _____

Address _____

Dec. 28th, 1895.

Orders to be addressed to THE PUBLISHER, "LONDON READER," 334, Strand, London, W.C.

FACETIA.

—
—
—

DORA : "Mr. Spooner says he always feels like a fish out of water when he is with me." CORA : "Then you've hooked him, haven't you?"

"After all, love and war are the only proper themes for a poet." "Why do you say love and war? Why don't you just say marriage?"

YOUNG MR. LOVEDAY : "Can you get me a lock of your sister's hair, Johnnie?" Johnnie : "No; but I can tell you where she gets it."

SERVANT (to lady who arrives a little late at the sewing circle) : "Excuse me, madam, I'd advise you to wait a few minutes. Just now they are talking about you."

Mrs. SWANSDOWN (at the ball) : "I wonder what is the name of that fellow I just danced with?" Miss Taffeta : "I heard him call himself a martyr."

LONDONER has asked Scottish visitor to have a parting glass, and is about to pay. "Na, na," said Sandy, "ye've been paying a thing a' the fortnicht. We'll toss for this drink."

"CLARA," said Emily, as they were seated on the verandah of their country house, "I went fishing with George this morning." "Did you? What did you catch?" "Well, I think I caught George."

ETHEL GOTROX : "Papa, you must let me marry Jack. He says he positively cannot live without me another day." Old Gotrox : "This is more serious than I thought it was. I had no idea he was so hard up as that."

UPON a gentleman's tomb in Warwickshire we read that he was "accidentally shot by his gamekeeper." Under this piece of information is the text, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

OLD LADY : "That parrot I bought of you uses dreadful language." Bird Dealer : "Ah, num, you should be worry careful what you see afore it; it's astonishing how quick them birds pick up anythink."

"WHAT is an Indian massacre?" asked the teacher. "It's when the Indians surprise the whites and kill them," said Bobby Bright. "And when the whites surprise the Indians and kill them—" "That's a battle."

"PAPA" said Jimmieboy, "you are the nicest man in the world." "And you are the nicest boy in the world," said his father. "Yes; I guess that's so," said Jimmieboy. "Isn't it queer how we both managed to get into the same family?"

OLD MR. WISBACRE : "Young man, when I was your age, I thought, like you, that I knew everything; but now I have reached the conclusion that I know nothing." Young Smartly : "Indeed! I reached that conclusion about you a long time ago."

CUSTOMER : "See here! You said that horse you sold me was fast." Dealer : "No, I didn't." "You said your man drove the horse to Lenville, twenty miles, and you went by train, and the horse got there before you did." "Yes, but I didn't start till next day."

THE story is told of an old gentleman who, arriving at a local hotel the other day, and said to the clerk, "Do you have damp sheets here?" The clerk, who wanted to be pleasant and accommodating, answered, "No, sir; but we will have yours sprinkled if you wish."

"I ASKED for bread," exclaimed the mendicant bitterly, "and you give me a brickbat!" The man glanced apprehensively in the direction of his young bride, who was bending eagerly over the cooking-stove. "Hush!" he whispered. "That's nothing to what you'd have got if you had asked for custard."

"YOUR husband, madam," said a polite doctor, cautiously, "is suffering from overwork or excessive indulgence in alcoholic stimulants; it is—ahem!—a little difficult to tell which." "Oh, it's overwork," replied the anxious wife. "Why, he cannot even go to the theatre without rushing out half a dozen times to see one of his partners."

Mrs. UPTON : "My dear, one servant is not enough in the kitchen now. We must have two." Mr. Upton : "Good lands! We have three daughters, and only yesterday I paid a big bill for their tuition in a cooking school." Mrs. Upton : "Yes, that's what's the matter. They are all assisting at the cooking, and Bridget says she must have additional help to clean up the mess."

AN intelligent boy in the national school of a large and populous town in Lancashire, on being examined, among others, by the Commissioners, was asked, "Do you know any of the effects of heat and cold?" "Yes, sir; heat expands and cold contracts." "Good, my boy, you have answered well. Now an example." "Why, sir, the days in midsummer are the longest, and in winter the shortest!"

"AND," said the Old Party, proposing the toast of the evening at a silver wedding, "respecting our host I can say this—and I speak of him with great confidence—that a better fellow never lived." (Hear, hear.) "I was present at his christening. I was present at a banquet given when he came of age. I was present at his wedding. I am present to-night to celebrate his silver wedding." (Hear, hear.) "And I can only hope I shall be present at his funeral."

ONE day a rich but ill-natured man, who made bad havoc of the French language, called upon Jules Janin, the famous French critic, and began a tirade upon some trivial matter in execrable French. After listening politely for some time, Janin at last replied to his visitor in Latin: "What do you mean, M. Janin?" demanded the man, angrily: "I don't understand you; I can't speak Latin." "Try, sir, try!" cried the great critic; "you could not speak it worse than you do French!"

A YOUNG Typist had just been hired by a prominent lawyer. She had never done regular work before, and was somewhat nervous. The lawyer settled himself back in his chair, and began dictating a brief. He had pegged away about five minutes, when the girl stopped, with a horrified look on her face. "What's the matter?" asked the lawyer. "Would you mind saying that all over again?" the girl asked, with eyes full of tears. "Why?" "I forgot to put any paper in the machine!"

A CLEGGYMAN going the rounds of his country parish in the south of Ireland met a farmer who, though residing in a neighbouring parish, was a regular attendant at his church. Said Pat: "If ye please, yer reverence, would ye mind prayin' for a wee drop o' rain next Sunday, for sorra a thing'll grow in me little garden wid the present hate o' the weather!" "Sorry to hear that, Pat," replied the divine, "but you ought to ask your own parson, not me." "Ah, shure," was the reply, "that's just it; what's the good in axin' him to pray for rain wid them ricks o' hay a-standing on his lawn?"

THE other day the crew of a German ship had occasion to visit a certain shipbuilding yard. After they had gone through a few of the different departments, they went into the paint-shop, where two Irishmen were busy mixing up red-lead paint. The Germans began talking in their own language, which quite astonished the two red-leaders, who were at a loss to understand one word they said. Pat thinking that his mate Mick would know, whispered: "Mick, do you know what these men are saying?" Mick: "Arrab now, Pat, don't show your ignorance, Pat, don't show your ignorance; they're speaking shorthand."

AN amusing incident occurred while a company of a certain battalion stationed in an English garrison town were going through their musketry training. Owing to a strong wind blowing from the right, the bullets kept falling to the left of the target. An old major, who was in charge at the ranges, came over to the colour-sergeant and inquired the cause of the bad shooting. On being told there was too much wind blowing from the right, causing the shots to fall wide, he astonished the sergeant by asking, "Wouldn't it be a good idea if the targets were moved to the left?" The colour-sergeant barely restrained a smile.

FAIR HOSTESS : "Now, Mr. Borom, you must spend one more evening with us before we go into our new house." Mr. Borom (graciously) : "Most certainly, with pleasure. When do you move?" Fair Hostess (doubtfully) : "Pa is uncertain just when that will be, but not for a year or two at the least."

MRS. YOUNGBIRD : "How does your breakfast suit you this morning, darling?" Mr. Youngbird: "Just right. I tell you, Clara, it may be plebeian, but I'm awfully fond of calf's liver." "So am I. Don't you think, George, it would be nice and economical to keep a calf; then we can have calf's liver for breakfast every morning."

"YOU women," complained young Mr. Sypher, "always laugh at the feist little thing." "You wrong us," earnestly returned the beautiful Miss Koolan; "when, Mr. Sypher, did I laugh at you?" And all the time they were removing the soup plates young Mr. Sypher looked into his napkin and thought and thought as well as he could.

"I BELIEVE a woman's sphere is the home." The lady of advanced ideas—and years—gazed at him scornfully as he spoke the words. "You forget"—her tone was harsh and strident—"you are addressing a New Woman!" "Yes," he said, "now they call 'em new women; but"—here he added, with emphasis—"it used to be old maids." Afterwards she was heard to allude to him as "a brute, so there!"

"EXCUSE me, sir," said the man in the row behind, "but would you mind asking your wife to remove her hat? I assure you that I cannot see a thing on the stage." "I'd like to oblige you, sir, but it is impossible," said the man addressed. "We live out of town, and we must get home to-night." "What has that got to do with it?" "What has that got to do with it? Why, our train goes twenty minutes after the end of the performance, and it takes her an hour to put that hat on."

He had been worshipping her for months, but had never told her so, and she did not want him to. He had come often and stayed late, very late. He was going away on his summer holidays the next day, and he thought that this, the last night, was the time to put the momentous question. He kept it to himself till the last moment. It was 11.30 by the clock, and he had not yet spoken. Then he braced himself up. "Miss Mollie—Mollie," he said tremblingly, "I am going away to-morrow." "Oh, are you?" she said, as she gazed wistfully at the clock. "Yes," he replied sadly, "are you sorry?" "Yes, I am very sorry indeed," she murmured. "I had been hoping you would go this evening."

AN old worthy—an octogenarian—residing near Lanark, has a wife some twenty years younger than himself, who is a capital helpmate, and who is of an exceedingly matter-of-fact disposition. The old gentleman was recently seized with a sudden illness, and, thinking that he was about to die, he made his will, and gave instructions to his weeping spouse regarding the funeral arrangements. As the day wore on, however, he began to feel somewhat easier, and eventually remarked to his wife: "Dad, Peggy, I think I'll pu' through this time yet." "Tame," answered the partner of his bosom, "as you are a' prepared, an' I'm quite resigned, I think it wad be as weel if ye just wad gang the noo!"

Two young ladies hailed a tram car, entered it, and found only standing room. One of them whispered to her companion,—"I'm going to get a seat from one of these men. You just watch!" She selected a sedate gentleman who wore the general settled appearance of a married man, sailed up to him, and boldly opened fire. "My dear Mr. Green! How delighted I am to meet you! You are almost a stranger! Will I accept your seat? Well, I do feel tired, I admit! Thank you so much!" The sedate gentleman, a total stranger, of course, looked, listened, then quietly rose and gave her his seat, saying as he did so,—"Sit down, Jane, my girl; don't often see you out on washing-day! You must feel tired, I'm sure! How's your mistress?" The young lady got her seat, but lost her vivacity.

SOCIETY.

THE Pope is now the possessor of probably the most valuable chair on earth. It is constructed of solid silver, and is of the value of £8,000. It is the gift of a wealthy American banker.

ACCORDING to the latest arrangements, the marriage of Princess Louise, eldest daughter of the Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Denmark, and Prince Frederick of Schaumburg-Lippe will take place about Easter at the Amalienborg Palace, Copenhagen, without any state ceremonial, the wedding being treated as merely a family event.

THE marriage between Princess Alexandra and the Hereditary Prince of Hohenlohe Langenburg is, according to present arrangements, to take place at Coburg in April. The arrangements will be similar to those for the marriage of the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse, and the Queen, the Emperor and Empress of Germany and the Empress Frederic are to be present.

THERE are surprisingly many expert musicians in the Royal houses of Europe. The Queen and her daughter Princess Louise play the piano and organ with great skill. The Prince of Wales plays the banjo remarkably well, and the Princess of Wales is an excellent pianist. The Duke of Connaught can do wonders with the flute; and the Duke of Edinburgh is hardly less accomplished in handling the violin.

THE Queen had intended to visit Naples in the spring, and villas in the suburbs and at Posillipo have been inspected, but the obstacles to this expedition have proved insuperable. It has also been found impossible to find a suitable residence in the Porto Fino district, which had been strongly recommended to her Majesty by the Empress Frederic who once thought of building herself a villa on the wooded hills near Rapallo.

THE Tsaritsa has determined to nurse her little baby herself. Her own mother, Princess Alice, like all her sisters, washed and dressed and nursed her babies; the Duchess of Fife has done the same, and the Tsaritsa is only obeying her English as well as her natural, motherly instincts in declining to have a wet-nurse for her infant. Nothing, perhaps, that she could have done will so endear her to the Russian people as this act, which seems perfectly natural to us. No previous Empress has ever nursed her children, and the Russians will regard what they take to be an exceptional evidence of devotion to the tiny Grand Duchess as a proof of the Tsaritsa's wish to cherish for them their possible future Emperor.

BETWEEN the Grand Duke of Hesse and his sister, the Empress of Russia, there has always existed the strongest affection. They were inseparable up to the time of the marriage of the Grand Duke, and it was only natural that he should hasten to Russia with the Grand Duchess, who is of course first cousin to the Tsar, to see his new little niece and be present at the baptism of his favourite sister's first child. The Tsaritsa has always taken the most affectionate interest in her brother's baby-girl, and it is certain that the tiny cousins will see much of each other as time goes on. Princess Louis of Battenberg, sister to the Tsaritsa, has only one girl and one boy, while the Grand Duchess Serga, her other sister, is childless. The new Grand Duchess Olga is therefore a welcome addition to her mother's family.

IT is very likely that the Queen will reside at the Château of Valrose, Nice, which has beautiful and extensive grounds, as Baron von Derwies (the owner) has offered to place it at her Majesty's disposal. A plan of the house has been sent to Windsor, and a report concerning the sanitary arrangements and the water supply is being prepared for Sir James Reid. In this case the Queen will again have the adjoining Villa Liserb, which Mr. Cazalet has let to an American family, on condition that the tenant gives up possession at the end of February if the house is required by her Majesty.

STATISTICS.

NATURALISTS say that a single swallow will devour 6,000 flies in a day.

MORE than half a million houses have been built in London during the last forty years.

OUT of every 100 ships passing through the Suez Canal 91 are British.

THE income derived by French people who rear fowls is, according to returns, about £67,000,000.

THE most powerful telescope now in use magnifies 2,000 diameters. As the moon is 240,000 miles from the earth, it is thus, to all intents and purposes, brought within 120 miles of our world.

GEMS.

DIFFICULTIES are meant to rouse, not discourage.

MEN do not have their choice whether they will accept life or not, but they can choose how they will live.

THE real author of a war is not the power that declares it, but the one that renders such a step necessary.

THE biting sarcasm and the cutting ridicule that give amusement to the unthinking and ill-disposed, by their keen edge cut at the root of many an innocent person's happiness.

EVERY man takes care that his neighbour shall not cheat him; but a day comes when he begins to care that he does not cheat his neighbour. Then all goes well. He has changed his market-cart into a chariot of the sun.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

LOBSTER CROQUETTES.—Two cups of finely chopped lobster, one saltspoonful of salt, one of mustard, a trifle of cayenna. Mix with one cup of cream sauce. Make into croquettes, roll in beaten egg and cracker crumbs and fry in hot lard.

LOBSTER SALAD.—Cut the meat of two small lobsters into small pieces. Add a little of the fat and coral. Then season with salt and pepper, and pour over enough mayonnaise dressing to moisten well. Put in the middle of a platter, garnish with lettuce leaves, pour over the remainder of the dressing, and put slices of boiled egg and olives over the top.

BREADCAKE CUPS.—Soak a pint of dry bread crumbs overnight in three cups of sweet milk. In the morning sift a teaspoonful of salt, an even teaspoonful of cream tartar, and half an even tea-spoonful of soda through a heaping cup of pastry flour; or use a heaping teaspoonful of baking powder in place of the soda and cream tartar. Add the milk and bread crumbs to the flour, and add also two well-beaten eggs and two teaspoonfuls of butter melted. Beat the batter vigorously and fry quickly.

A TEMPTING way of serving sausages is with apple sauce or on a bed of beans. The red bean is used for this purpose by French cooks, but a white bean will serve. The beans should be soaked over night, and the water in which they are soaked should be poured off them in the morning. They should then be put in a pot. To a pint of beans, measured before soaking, add a tablespoonful of butter and a small onion with a clove stuck in it. Cover them with cold water and let them cook slowly until they are tender; as the water boils away, add more. When the beans are soft enough to be easily crushed in the fingers, remove them from the fire. Season them with salt and pepper, take out the onion and serve them. They are a very good accompaniment of roast pork or broiled chops, as well as of sausages.

MISCELLANEOUS.

SAFES rendered burglar-proof by electricity are one of the latest suggestions.

IN Belgium the fire departments of some of the cities have utilized the tricycle as a hose cart, and find the result satisfactory.

IN Zululand the atmosphere is so clear that objects can be seen by starlight, at a distance of seven miles.

THESE is said to be a scarcity of Cuban cedar for cigar-boxes since the outbreak of the revolution in that country. A good substitute, and one often used, however, is cumber-wood, which is dyed to the popular colour.

ONE of the most wonderful of the feathered inhabitants of South America is the oven bird, which mixes hair with mud and builds its nest in the form of a baker's oven. In this structure there are two compartments, one of which—where the eggs are laid—is high up, so that the birds may hatch their young in the dry.

IN Poland it was once the custom to sentence backbiters to go on all-fours and bark like a dog for the space of a quarter of an hour. This mode of punishment was introduced during the reign of Charles V., but it was soon abolished, as it had to be applied so frequently that his Majesty's rest was disturbed, for the barking went on all the forenoon while the courts were sitting.

IN the winter in Norway all the vehicles are sledges—the carriages, cabs, carts, and even the perambulators are on runners. Outside the town, where the road is not trodden hard, it is impossible to walk without the snow-shoes of the country. These are called "ski," and are long wooden planks, measuring nearly 9 feet for a fully grown man. They are $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick and about 4 inches wide, slightly raised at the toes, and pointed off like the shoes of Chaucer's day. The wood for ski is not sown, but split with the grain, so that they never break, and can bear a tremendous strain.

THESE is probably no insecticide that is useful and so generally in demand as Paris green. It is a preparation of arsenic, and is fatal to a very great number of gardeners' and florists' pests. One of the difficulties in using it is that it settles at the bottom of the vessel in which the solution is made. Experiments are in progress looking to a preparation which will not have this objection. The coarse crystals are thought to be very much stronger, and this peculiarity has made a market for it, when in reality there is a fine powder which is less expensive and more effective. There is a new process in the manufacture of Paris green, by which it is combined with acetic acid. In one of the new forms it is an impalpable powder which will remain in suspension for many hours. If this proves to be the success it promises, it is superior in quality to the ordinary Paris green and costs but half as much.

GOLD rings are made from bars nine or fifteen inches long. A bar fifteen inches long, about two inches wide, three-sixteenths of an inch thick, is worth about a thousand dollars. It would make three hundred four-pennyweight rings. A dozen processes and twenty minutes' time are required to change the bar into merchantable rings. A pair of shears cuts the bar into strips. By the turn of a wheel, one, two, or three times, the guillotine-like blade of the shears cuts the bar into slices, one, two, or three-sixteenths of an inch wide. A rolling machine presses out the strips and makes them flat or grooved. Each strip is then put under the blowpipe and annealed. The oxide of copper comes to the surface and is put into a pickle of sulphuric acid, the bit of gold is stamped with its quality and the name of the maker, and is put through a machine that bends it into the shape of a ring, the same making a ring of any size. The ends are soldered with an alloy of inferior fineness to the quality of the ring. Many people imagine that rings are run in a mould because they can't see where they are soldered. The ring spins through the turning lathe, is rounded and pared, and polished, first with tripoli and then with steel filings and rouge.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. M.—*Nuttall's Dictionary.*

K. B.—*Advertisers are never given.*

PAT.—*Macfadyen is an Irish name.*

QUARANT.—*Lambert is an English name.*

L. B.—*He could and he probably would.*

LORELY.—*We cannot advise you on this point.*

MISERY.—*Not unless they entered the workhouse.*

PHIL.—*We are not aware of any works on the subject.*

INQUIRATIVE.—*We regret we have no information to give.*

L. G.—*The wife should apply to the parish authorities for relief.*

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—*Such information is never given.*

KODIA.—*Certainly, and consider himself honoured by the privilege.*

FLEETWOOD.—*You are liable for the rent up to the day of your removal.*

O. T.—*There is no fixed value; it varies in proportion to the demand.*

H. G.—*Take them to a dealer; there is no fixed price for old publications.*

DOUBTFUL.—*We have heard the mixture highly spoken of; consult a dentist.*

FRATZ.—*It is an honorary prefix, like the French "de" and the German "von."*

INQUIRER.—*We have never heard of one, but you had better inquire of some maker.*

D'ARCY.—*Your height and weight are above the average for a young man of seventeen.*

M. B.—*The first thimbles were made in Holland. They were brought to England in 1695.*

G. B.—*The best way to avert the ailment is to keep yourself in good condition and avoid chills.*

UNEMPLOYED.—*Insert an advertisement in the daily papers, stating what kind of labour you desire.*

ALBERT.—*Your handwriting is not good enough for a clerk's situation, but would do for a shopman's place.*

A. F.—*Place a layer of straw on the floor of a dry, well-ventilated room, and put the apples carefully on this.*

J. M. C.—*Verdicts of juries must be unanimous; and in case of one jurymen holding out the whole are discharged.*

OLD READER.—*You should have an expert to see and examine it; no one can help you without a personal examination.*

INTERESTED.—*There is no king of Ashantee; Premphoh is king of Coomassie. His age is twenty-five, and he has many children.*

CHANGEBAL.—*It is exceedingly difficult to find employment in any business to which you have not been regularly brought up.*

D. A. D.—*From Canterbury to Stirling by rail is 479 miles, and the time occupied in the journey would be from eleven to twelve hours.*

CURIOUS.—*Alloway Kirk was the name of a ruined church near Ayr, Scotland, immortalized in Burns' poem of "Tam O' Shanter."*

INDIGENT.—*We suggest that you write out your complaint and forward it to those whose duty it will be to investigate and report upon it.*

H. P.—*Water clocks were arranged on the same principle as sand glasses, a certain quantity of water dropping through a small space in a certain time.*

UNBROTHIATED.—*A bride should wear a veil at a wedding if she wears the regulation white bridal dress, though with any other costume a veil is not worn.*

A CONSTANT READER.—*We never answer questions through the post, and are quite unable to tell you accurately what you want to know.*

HOUSWIFE.—*The cause we cannot tell. Brewing an abundance of powdered borax in their haunts, if persevered in, in many cases entirely exterminates them.*

ISOMORPHISM.—*The writer of the book of Esther is generally supposed to have been Mordecai, and the book is so called because it contains the history of the queen of that name.*

HUNGRY.—*The hottest place on the face of the earth is said to be the desert near Massowah, 133 degrees in the shade; the coldest is in the North-West Territory of Canada, often 70 degrees below zero.*

D. H.—*The only way to prevent rust from coming through paint put upon iron is to thoroughly clean the rust before applying the paint, and work in a good ground coat of oil on the scratched places.*

C. Y.—*You must liquify it by heat by putting the vessel containing it into a saucepan of boiling water, keep it hot, and when liquid dip in each stick. Be careful of its taking fire while you are at work.*

POXMAN.—*Sponges were long thought to be vegetables, but they are now known to be animals. To which grow mostly at the bottom of the sea, on rocks, to which they are fixed by a kind of root, some in deep and some in shallow water, and in pieces of various sizes.*

BESTLESS.—*You must be governed by your own judgment in regard to a change of residence. If you are doing fairly well where you are at present, it may be that you will do much better in the near future.*

JACKSON.—*Cultivate your taste for painting, even if you have no desire to do so for a living. It is a fine accomplishment, and will enable you to pass your time, when not employed in other matters, very agreeably.*

R. J.—*A man who has served in either the Indian Mutiny or Crimean campaigns, and possesses a medal prior to 1860, is entitled to a pension; he must have served for ten years, and be in destitute circumstances.*

INEXPERIENCED.—*The best man, of course, is expected to give a present to the bride; if he thinks fit he may also give a present to the bridesmaid, such as gloves, satin slippers, fan, or other trifles; but that is optional.*

PERENNIAL.—*It is only necessary to impress the need for two qualifications upon your mind, and these are thoroughness and strict attention to business. These are the primary requirements in any profession.*

BRASS-STRUCK.—*Select any profession in preference to the stage. Those who are unacquainted with the vicissitudes attending theatrical life cannot conceive the hardships and privations inferior actors are compelled to endure.*

CONSTANT READER.—*Applications for situations on the Cape Government railways should be addressed either to the Agent-General for the Cape, Victoria-street, London, S.W., or to Mr. John Cape, Engineer-in-Chief, Cape Town, South Africa.*

FOOTBALL.

CAW you mention a contest of vigour and skill, That can with excitement the pulses so thrill, So strengthen the muscles, so quicken the eye, So contribute to render a lany man spry, Such enjoyment to those who share in it impart, That has taken such hold on the popular heart, As that glorious sport which enraptures us all, That fine, manly pastime—the game of Football!

When two gallant elevens in battle array Encounter, no matter how stormy the day, You will find on the grounds all the world and his wife Assembled to witness the arduous strife.

All wearing the colours of this or that team, Going frantic when either side "puts on the steam," And as their young heroes charge, wrestle and fall, What a storm of wild cheers greets the game of Football!

Pretty girls without number and matrons are there; The young, middle-aged and old folks with gray hair, The merchant, the lawyer, the dashing young dude, And clergymen, too, the assemblage include. Each spectator is wrapt in the game heart and soul, And when that "brown bag" is sent over the goal, That some throats get sore I have no doubt at all, With the shouts o'er a victory won at Football!

Brighter sparkle bright eyes, quickly flutter soft hearts, As forward with the ball some "half-back" swiftly starts, And if stopped by a "guard" and the ball snatched away,

Each fair lady admires the dexterous play, And as "left end" and "tackle" and "guard" and "full-back,"

Meet in desperate struggle until their joints crack, Though the damage to shins is no doubt rarely small, How grimful of fun is the game of Football!

W. R. B.

B. A. G.—*We are not aware that the question which you submit has ever been made the subject of scientific investigation, and until it shall have been scientifically determined, it must, of course, be a mere matter of speculation.*

SCRAOG.—*The world is full of people who would be glad indeed if they knew of some way to grow stouter. But what will secure this end in one person fails in another. Why not try eating rice and drinking milk with a good deal of cream in it?*

J. F.—*We never advise actions against the police, not even when, as in your case, they have been guilty of the most glaring injustice; one official stands to the support of another to an extent which makes it all but physically impossible for a mere citizen like you to establish a case for damages.*

I.D.A.—*Stains of which the cause is unknown will frequently disappear if held in a pan of milk boiling on the fire, or by dipping them in sour buttermilk and drying them in the sun. The articles should then be washed in cold water, dried, and the process repeated several times in the day.*

A. M. Y.—*You might write to the commanding officer of the regiment into which he is enlisted, stating all the facts and asking the release of the lad; but we are afraid the only way in which the thing can be managed is by paying £10 within three months of the enlistment.*

H. B. F.—*Phrenology is not supposed to have attained to the rank of an exact science, and is not by many persons relied upon in making up estimates of character. It is, however, right in the main, and most of the features that are chronicled are due to faulty reading and the exceptional and eccentric characters that are said to prove rules.*

CASING.—*Scorched linen can be restored if the threads are not injured. Peel, slice and extract the juice from two onions, add half a pint of vinegar, half an ounce of curd soap, two ounces of fuller's earth—boil these well, and when cool, spread over the scorched, let it dry on, and then wash out the garment.*

L. N.—*Writers who desire to have their writings published often pay the publisher for doing the work. Otherwise they are sent to the editors of papers and magazines, and are accepted if satisfactory. Use any good paper, write only on one side, and sign your own name or a fictitious one, just as you please.*

ROSINA.—*Hold the part affected in the steam proceeding from the spout of a half-filled kettle of boiling water; this will raise the pimple. The water in the kettle should not come much above where the spout enters; if it does the steam will probably escape by the cover in place of the spout, which would be inconvenient.*

YOUNG HOUSEKEEPER.—*It depends upon condition. If not much soiled, equal proportions of stale bread crumbs and finely-powdered starch for grey or finely-powdered chalk for drab, carefully and thoroughly rubbed on all over, using for rubber a pad of stale bread crumb will do it, but it needs patience. Grease or stains must, of course, be otherwise removed.*

FORUM.—*All persons do not wait for "things to come round." They launch out into enterprises, at the beginning of their careers, which promise much or little as the case may be, and all through life venture more and more in the various speculations which turn up. If you have become weary of "waiting," bestir yourself at once and resolve to make fortune do something for you worthy of your abilities.*

FERNDALE.—*There is really no infallible hair restorer; some find that pure paraffin oil, sweetened with any perfume, rubbed into the scalp daily, brings up the crop satisfactorily; others recommend a common, not Spanish, onion cut into little squares and put into a pine bottle, filled up with gin; ready for use in twenty-four hours—liquid to be rubbed into the scalp daily; in many cases gentle brushing with a hard brush is found of great use.*

SARACENS.—*In regard to the origin of the name Saracen, which, it is said, was originally that of an Arab tribe, afterwards applied to the followers of Mohammed, and later to all the Moorish or Mohammedan people who invaded Europe, and against whom the Crusaders waged war, it is thought by some writers that it came from an Arab tribe, who claimed Sarah as their ancestress in order to escape the stigma of being descendants of Hagar. The exact locality of the tribe has never been satisfactorily indicated.*

ROSS.—*Blood-rain is a shower of grayish and reddish dust mingled with rain, which once in a while falls on vessels off the Atlantic coast of Africa and Southern Europe. The origin of the dust is not known. The red colour is owing to the presence of a red oxide of iron. Showers have sometimes fallen in Italy, reddish snow at the same time appearing on the Alps. The dust of these showers has been ascertained to be largely made up of microscopic organisms, especially of the shells of diatoms, a family of siliceous animalcules, now believed to belong to the vegetable kingdom.*

ADA.—*An excellent spiced fruit may be made from grapes. To prepare them, pick from the stems seven pounds of ripe grapes and separate the pulp from the skins. Put the skins into a preserving kettle over the fire with enough water to prevent them from burning. In another kettle place the pulp, and cook until it will press easily through a sieve to remove the seeds. Add the strained pulp to the skins with half a pint of sharp vinegar, and one ounce each of whole cloves, allspice, and cinnamon. Boil together until it is thick, and put into jelly glasses.*

MONTAGU.—*The women who took part in the secret festivities in honour of Bacchus were called Bacchantes. Subsequently the men were initiated into the Bacchanalia, and the term was applied to both sexes. Some time later the name was also applied to such students of the male sex who led a dissolute life and who begged for the means of prosecuting their studies. When they became teachers they gave instructions to younger students, and imparted to them the tricks of their peculiar life, exacting in return that they should beg and steal for them. In other words, they acted as their servants. The Reformation put an end to these practices.*

THE LOWDOW READER, Post-free. Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly, One Shilling and Eightpence.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS AND VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of all Booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 414, Now Ready, price Sixpence, postage, Eightpence. Also Vol. LXV., bound in cloth, 6s. 6d.

THE INDEX TO VOL. LXV. IS NOW READY; PRICE ONE PENNY, post-free, Three-halfpence.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 324, STRAND, W.C.

† We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

London : Published for the Proprietor, at 324, Strand, by G. F. COOKSON; and printed by WOODFALL AND KINSEY, 70 to 76, Long Acre, W.C.